CAMPMATES IN MICHIGAN

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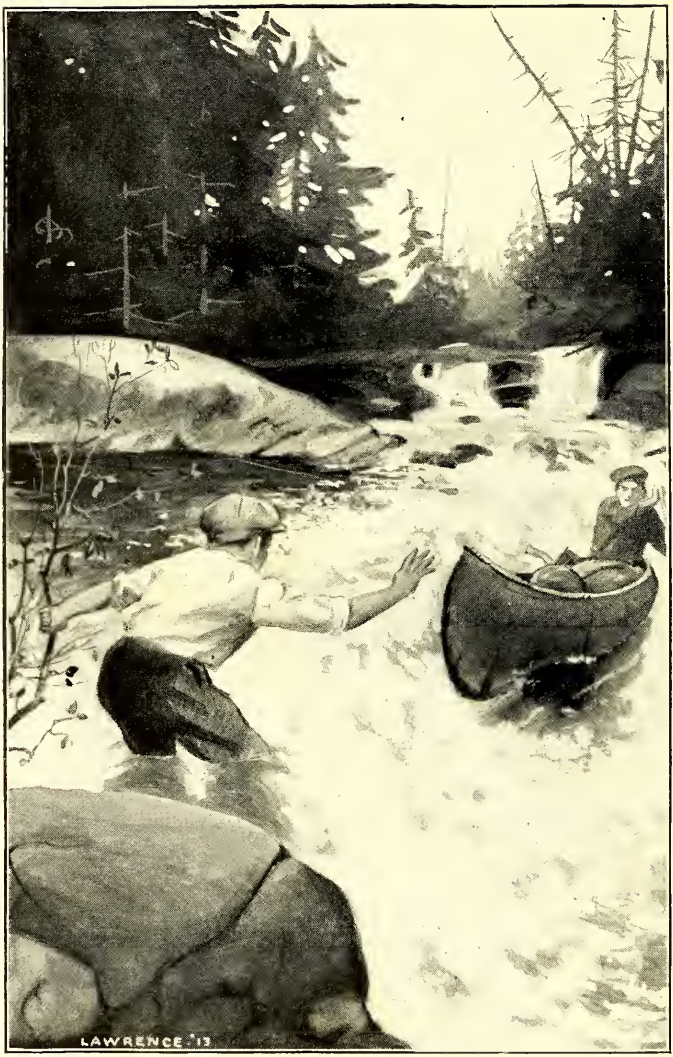

TEDDY SAW HIS CHUM PADDLE AWAY

(Camp Mates in Michigan) (Page 104)

CAMP MATES IN MICHIGAN

or

WITH PACK AND PADDLE IN THE PINE WOODS

by

ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE

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Camp Mates in Michigan

or

With Pack and Paddle in the Pine Woods

CHAPTER I

THE UNWELCOME VISITOR IN CAMP

"Wake up everybody! Boarders ahoy! Hey! something's after our grub! Hurry up, or we'll be cleaned out!"

There was an upheaval of blankets in the lone tent that stood on the bank of a Michigan stream; then three boys came crawling every-which-way out, without more than a hazy idea as to what they were doing.

But at any rate, all of them seemed to know where their guns lay, for every fellow gripped one in his hands as he emerged in this manner from the interior of the khaki colored tent, made so by some waterproofing tanning process.

"What is it, Dolph?" demanded the first to arrive on the heels of the boy who had shouted the alarm, and whose name was Dolph Bradley.

"It jumped back, Teddy, when I poked my head out; and I think made up in that pine yonder," came the quick response, as the aforesaid Dolph pointed with his gun.

"And was it getting away with some of our fine stuff?" asked Teddy, in evident dismay, as his eyes roamed toward a little pile of duffle at the foot of another tree close to the tent.

"It sure was. That's the ham lying right out there, now, where I guess he dropped it at seeing me. After this we've got to take that into the tent with us, if we want to save the same."

"But are we going to let the scamp get off scot free, after nearly wrecking the expedition; because if we lost our ham I'd feel like our best friend was gone? For one, I'd like to let this thief know what we think of him. I think I could put a charge of Number Sevens under his jacket, from my little Marlin here, that would do the business in double-quick style," and Teddy Overton patted the repeating twelve-bore modern gun he held, with the air of one who knew he could depend on its hard hitting qualities.

"Let's spread out a little, so as to cover more ground," suggested Dolph; and with

that the three boys moved apart, each with his weapon half raised, so as to be ready for quick work, if the necessity arose.

The one who as yet had not spoken a single word, gave the fire a kick in passing, and this caused it to blaze up afresh, just as he knew it would.

"Good for you, Amos!" exclaimed Dolph. "That makes it better to aim by. Does anybody glimpse him yet?"

"Not I; but see here, Dolph," Teddy went on to say, "you haven't told us what sort of a beast it was. Must be along the cat order, or it wouldn't try to steal a whole ham, and then take to a tree, when you poked your head out to see what was doing."

"It sure was a cat, and the biggest I ever ran across," Dolph hurriedly declared. "You see, the fire was burning kind of low, and it jumped so quick I didn't get more'n a glimpse of the thing; but there was something queer about it. If you asked me right off the shoulder now, I'd be apt to say it had little bells hanging from its ears!'

Teddy burst out into a laugh.

''Hear that, Amos?" he cried. "Rings on her fingers, and bells on her toes; she shall have music wherever she goes, eh? Sounds

like that, doesn't it? Now, I guess from what you say, Dolph, our bold visitor, that likes smoked ham so much, belongs to the lynx class of bob-cats."

"What, a real Canada lynx?" exploded Dolph. "That excites me a whole lot, let me tell you; for if there's one animal in this country I've always wanted to run across it's a genuine lynx. Heard a lot about the sly things, too. Shot cats in Florida, Louisiana, Virginia, and up in Maine, but never saw a lynx. I hope you're not mistaken, Teddy, and that I get a chance to clap my eyes on him."

"Then look sharp; I know the beast's habits pretty well," ventured the other; whose father being a rich lumber merchant, it was only natural that the boy should be acquainted with these Michigan pine woods, and their furry inhabitants," and the chances are that, having got a taste of our fine ham, he won't want to clear out without trying to carry it with him."

"Wait! I think I see something that looks like a big knob on one of his limbs!' exclaimed Dolph, eagerly.

"Hi! there, go slow!" cautioned Teddy, fearing an attack, if any blunder were com-

mitted; "a lynx only wounded can upset a whole camp like a twister of a cyclone had struck it, ain't that so, Amos?"

"It sure is," answered the third member of the party of campers, a stocky boy, who was not apparently as well to do as the others, if one could judge from the old gun he carried, and his general make-up; for while Teddy and Dolph had donned pajamas when they retired for the night, Amos had simply removed part of his day clothes, and crawled under his blanket that way; but from the manner in which he handled his weapon, he evidently felt pretty much at home in the wilderness.

"Does it seem to move, Dolph?" asked Teddy, when the other continued to bend his head forward, and stare at a certain point among the rather thick branches of the marked pine.

"Don't seem to, and that's what bothers me," came the ready reply. "I rather think it can't be much, either, because, if it was the lynx, I'd almost surely see his yellow eyes staring at me, wouldn't I?"

"That's what you would," answered Amos.

"And that's been what I've had my eye peeled for all the time," declared Teddy.

"But I wish somebody'd hurry up and glimpse the old thief. This night air ain't as salubrious as it might be. Fact is, I'm beginning to get the shakes; and give you my word, it ain't the excitement at all that's making my hands tremble. Think that if I moved over this way a little, perhaps I might stir him up. Watch now, everybody; and shoot at the drop of a hat!"

As he said this, Teddy slowly started to walk farther away, so as to be able to investigate parts of the suspected tree that, up to then, had not come fully under observation. The revived fire was doing pretty well, for the flames had seized on portions of wood only partly burned, and were crackling merrily. And the light revealed the presence of two up-to-date canoes partly hauled up on the shore not thirty feet away from the tent, thus disclosing the fact that the trio of lads had used the water way in order to reach their present camp in the Michigan pines.

A sudden exclamation from Teddy announced that his latest move had met with at least some measure of success.

"See anything?" called out Dolph, eagerly, for he had been hoping that the opportunity to blaze away might come to him.

"Looks like it, but I'll soon know," replied the other, as he stooped to pick up some object. "I'm going to toss this piece of wood up there. Be ready now; for if it's our visitor he'll be apt to change his position. Here goes!

With that he gave the object a quick twirl, and they could distinctly hear it stirring the outer branches of the pines, to fall to the ground again with a soft thud.

Teddy was heard to utter a sharp ejaculation, and from this the others understood that in all probability his little scheme had met with success. They glanced that way and saw him bend his head down to glance along the repeating gun's matted barrel.

Then came a sudden report, and with it a shrill screech, that sounded very much as though Teddy could have made no mistake when be believed he was aiming at the hairy thief.

Loud outcries arose with the opening of hostilities.

"Did you nail him?" demanded Dolph, greatly excited.

"No, I guess not," replied Teddy, in a chagrined tone. "The beast gave a jump just as I pulled trigger, and I must have cut

the air where he sat. But he hasn't left that tree yet, fellows. We command every side of the same; and unless he can fly, we ought to get another crack at him. Be lively, now, and try to do better than I did. I must still be in the greenhorn class, though I thought I'd graduated three years ago.

"Oh! don't worry about that!" sang out Dolph, cheerily: "mistakes will happen you know, even in the best regulated families. I've done worse than that more'n a few times; and I've hunted in a good many countries with my dad, you know. Wow! I wonder now, can that be the sly cat? Yes, looks like I can see twin glow-worms up there in that dark pocket. Had I better give him a try, Teddy?"

"If you feel pretty sure it's the ham thief, why, go ahead and pot him; but as quick as you shoot, leap to one side; because I've always heard these lynx are just chain lightning on the jump, even when they've got their death wound."

"Reckon I will then, because I ain't hankering after feeling his claws rake me fore and aft," replied Dolph, who came from Cincinnati, and was the son of a well known millionaire of that city.

"Steady, boy; make sure!" cautioned Teddy, as he saw that the other was aiming upward with his expensive gun, the finest that a celebrated firm in England could put together for any amount of money; but which even then Teddy would not have accepted for his own tried and true weapon.

Hardly had he spoken than Dolph fired. Remembering the warning given by his campmate the Cincinnati boy jumped backward as soon as he had fairly pulled the trigger. His heels catching in a root, the presence of which he knew nothing about, as a consequence he was tripped up, and went headlong to the ground.

Dolph was conscious of a shrill scream, this time not of anger but pain; and that some heavy body flew through space in the very spot which his form had occupied. That fall was the finest thing that could have happened to him, after all, because, in spite of his movement, the leaping lynx must have landed on him only for his sprawling on his back.

Realizing the desperate nature of his position Dolph rolled over once or twice before he even attempted to regain an erect position. Then, on his knees he worked at the mechanism of his expensive imported shotgun, only

to find that somehow his fall must have jammed it; or else in his excitement he failed to do exactly the thing that was necessary, for he could not get another shell in the firing chamber.

"This way, quick; I can't get my gun to work!" he shrilled, half believing that in another instant he would have the unfuriated and wounded lynx on top of him.

He could hear a dreadful threshing about only a few yards away from him; and the awful thought flashed through his head that perhaps the beast was clawing one of his chums. But as he immediately after saw Teddy coming on the jump from one direction, while the Michigan boy showed up from the other Dolph's mind became easier.

"It's over there—I must have hit it hard, from the racket the thing keeps up! Be ready to cover him, Teddy, Amos; because my plaguey old gun's jammed, and I can't get it to work!"

"Don't bother," said Teddy, with a short, nervous laugh; "I guess you potted your first lynx all right, old fellow. He's sure kicking his last, if I'm any judge of things. But don't get too close, mind you; they're nasty, treacherous beasts at the best. And he might

give some of us a streaking with his last effort."

"Oh!" shouted Dolph, with such an odd inflection of alarm in his voice that the others were naturally startled.

"What's the matter now?" cried Teddy, whirling around toward the other.

"There's another cat crawling along on the ground—by ginger! two of 'em! Why, the woods must be full of them! We're going to be swamped with lynxes, boys; and this gun just *won't* behave half-way decent," and Dolph ended with a groan as he kept working away excitedly at the mechanism of his repeating weapon.

"Where? I see one!" cried Teddy, as he swung his gun around swiftly.

"Bang!"

"That's the end of *him*; now show me the other cat, will you, Dolph? Bring 'em on as fast as you like; as long as my little Marlin's got a single shell left, I'm good for any amount of game. Where's the next victim?"

"Over yonder, crouching at the foot of that tree; don't you see its eyes now, Teddy?" whooped the boy from Cincinnati.

"Shure I do; and that means I'm due for

another victim. Watch me rool his hoop for him, will you, fellows?"

"Bang!" went the repeating shotgun again.

"You did it that time too, Teddy! Oh! if only this old gun hadn't got stuck just when I needed it most, I might have made a clean sweep of the lot!" cried Dolph. "I've got a good notion to smash the old thing against a tree, and do without the rest of the trip, that's what!"

"Don't think of it," called out the lumberman's son, steadily. "Perhaps after all you're more to blame than the gun, Dolph. I've been that excited myself when in a bad hole, that I hardly knew how I was clawing at the right part of my gun to work a new shell in. Do you see any sign of my cats coming out of their trance again?"

"No, they seem as dead as doornails; that gun is a hard hitter, Teddy," remarked Amos Simmons, as he handled his own rather old fashioned single shot weapon with something approaching a sigh, as of envy, though he never voiced such a feeling.

CHAPTER II

PADDLING AGAINST THE CURRENT

"Any more around that you can see?" Teddy went on to call out, hilariously. "If there are, let 'em step right up to the pursers' office, and settle. But I rather think the pair I potted look sort of small for the lynx tribe. I guess they must be half-grown cubs, after all; and you got the mother, Dolph."

"Just what they are," announced Amos, who had strode forward, and was bending over the last victim of Teddy's snap shots. "But pretty tough lookin' customers at that, I tell you, boys. I kinder guess they'd put up a rushin' fight, if cornered. But you wound 'em up one, two, three, Teddy, with that gun of yours."

Amos was a real Michigan boy. He had been in logging camps ever since he was "knee high to a grasshopper," as he always said; and was as tough as a pine-knot, so far as physical endurance went. Teddy had known him several years; and once before they had hunted in company around this very

region. While the lumberman's son and his friend from Cincinnati laid out this summer trip with pack and paddle through the pine woods of the upper reaches of the Wolverine State, Teddy had suggested hiring Amos to go along, not exactly in the nature of a guide, nor yet as a cook, but simply for company. And knowing that when far away from civilization two boys are apt to find it a bit lonely, Dolph had readily agreed.

He had heard his friend tell more or less about the natural ability Amos possessed as a doctor; and that it was the ambition of his life to later on take a regular course in some medical school. And Teddy had also confided to Dolph the fact that he meant to coax his father to see that the woods boy had his chance, when he reached an age to allow of such a thing; because he would make a fine doctor some day, as his whole heart was set on curing ailments, binding up wounds, and alleviating pain.

So it came that there were three of them in the party, with two canoes instead of just one overcrowded boat. Most of the duffle, such as the tent and the blankets, they usually stored in this one canoe, with a single occupant to ply the paddle, while the other

two campers took charge of the second craft.

They had laid out a regular course, which would take them through the wildest part of the country of the peninsula, starting in at Manistique on the southern shore, where the waves of Lake Michigan beat the sandy strand, and following the winding, picturesque river up to the lakes that were said to be its source. At this point they expected to find some man who had a team capable of taking their light canvas canoes across country, until beyond the railroad they could be launched in the waters of the Tahquamanon river; following which to its mouth would bring the adventurous cruisers into the celebrated White Fish Bay of Lake Superior; and here they could skirt the shore until finally they arrived at Saulte Ste. Marie, where the waters of Superior rush down the mighty rapids into St. Mary's river, thence through Lakes Huron, Erie and Ontario, and afterwards being carried along the mighty St. Lawrence river to the sea.

It was a noble trip to lay out, and the three boys had already spent some time making their way to the point where we find them passing a night on the bank of the river, at the time the wildcats invaded their camp,

and produced such consternation, although paying dearly for their fun.

"Now come and take a look at your prize, Dolph!" Teddy called out, and then it's back to my downy for me; because I'm shaking all over, like a jelly-fish."

He dragged the now defunct lynx out nearer the still blazing fire, so that the others could look it over.

"Ugh! I'm right glad now that root tripped me up," remarked Dolph. "Only for that, those claws might have ripped me considerably before the beast keeled over."

"I should say, yes," chuckled Teddy. "And now excuse me, please, but I'm in for the grand disappearing act. I'll chuck that fine ham inside the tent as I go. Better follow my example, Dolph, if you don't want to catch cold. Get your gun to work yet?"

"Why, yes, it seems to; but I'm rather discouraged about the thing," the other remarked. "Guess these repeating guns are a bit unreliable in a pinch."

"H'm! not if you keep your wits about you, and do the right thing; but for any one apt to get rattled, the old style might be best. Not that I'm blaming you, this time, Dolph, because you had an ugly tumble, you see. Well, so-long."

As neither of the other lads chanced to be feeling any too warm about then, they waited not upon the order of their going, but ducked into the tent soon after Teddy vanished. Amos, however, with the instinct of one who had spent pretty much all of his young life in the forest, waited long enough to throw several more large pieces of wood on the fire, meaning to find something warm when morning came along, for the air was sure to be cool up to the time the sun rose part way up in the eastern heavens.

There was no further alarm; and when dawn came peeping through the pines the campers were soon astir. However, no one seemed anxious to take the customary morning dip in the stream, so sharp was the air. Dolph had his fishing-rod jointed, it being a steel affair calculated to resist the rush of even a furious muscallonge. So, being an enthusiast in this sport, he was out the first thing, having a try to see whether he could not pick up a mess of trout for breakfast.

Fortune smiled on his efforts too, for he made several fairly decent captures, which Amos cleaned in the most approved style as fast as the fisherman threw them to him.

And in the end, just as the first rays of the sun found them out, from the delicate odors

that were going up from that fire, such as coffee and trout, it was evident that the boys were in for a treat they never tired of.

While Dolph was doing the fishing, and Amos looking after breakfast, the third member of the expedition had another sort of job laid out for his amusement. This consisted in taking off the furry coats of the three dead lynx. They were all in a fair condition, though the shot holes would have to be hidden by the man who eventually made them into a rug; and for the summer season, when furs are generally pretty "skimp," Teddy said they passed muster.

Amos knew how to cook trout so as to brown them in a crisp manner. He first of all "tried out" several slices of fat salt pork; and after the resulting liquid had become furiously hot, he dropped in the fish, that had first been dipped in cracker crumbs. It was very much after the manner in which the New England cook manages with her crullers, only no lard was used.

Each of the boys was gifted with a hearty appetite; and when breakfast was declared closed there were precious few crumbs to throw away, outside of the fish-bones. Yet Amos had seen to it that enough had been provided to satisfy all.

Afterwards came the duty of taking down the tent, and packing things away in the canoe that was used partly for their transportation, being paddled by Amos himself, the huskiest of the lot.

They had this thing reduced to a science, from long practice. Everything went in a particular place, and thus they economized in the matter of space, which counted for much on a trip of this sort.

"All ready?" sang out Dolph, as he balanced his paddle, sitting in the front of the canoe which he and Teddy managed.

"Just a minute more, while I throw some water on what's left of the fire," said Teddy. "You see, I'm a lumberman's son, and I never like to think of taking chances of having the wind scatter the red-hot embers of a deserted camp fire, to start a forest blaze that might burn up millions and millions of feet of fine timber."

"Yes'm you're right, I believe in the same thing!" declared Dolph, "though I look at it from the view of a true sportsman, who will never, never leave a fire burning after him, when he breaks up camp. I was in one woods' fire up in the Adirondacks two years back, and came mighty near having my crop

of hair singed off; and they said it started just in that way, on a windy day. Why, in Maine, they won't let hunters go into the woods without a licensed guide along, who is supposed to see to it that no chances are taken with fires left by careless city sportsmen; or rather men who like to call themselves by that name, though they are often a disgrace to the cloth."

"Yes, I've run across a-plenty of that kind up here in Michigan, and over in Wisconsin," remarked Amos. "We call'em fish hogs up here, because, when they strike a lake where the trout bite free-like, they keep on throwing bushels out on the bank to die and rot. I hate the breed, and I think they just ought to be tarred and feathered, that's what."

"Same here," remarked Teddy. "In my opinion every fellow who wants to call himself a true sportsman should give the animals and fish a chance to breed. When he's caught all he can use, he ought to stop fishing, unless he happens to be using artificial flies, when he can put all the rest he takes back again, because they won't be hurt that way. I've stopped many a time when using live minnow, because I knew that when bass gorge the bait, they're sure to die, even if you

do throw them overboard again. The hook tears them more or less. Well, everybody ready now?"

"O. K. here!" sang out Amos.

"Then let's be off, for we've got a strong bit of work before us today, with all this water coming down the old Manistique," and as he spoke, Teddy thrust his paddle deep in the running water of the river, and gave a thrust that started the canoe on its farther journey northward.

As they labored with regular movements the boys often indulged in laughter, and even broke out at times in bits of song; for they were light-hearted, and seemed to have few cares or troubles sitting on their broad shoulders. Indeed, the millionaire's son, and the heir of the wealthy lumberman, certainly knew nothing at all of anxiety with regard to their well-being. Amos, being a poor boy, often doubtless tried to lift the veil of the future, eager to ascertain what lay in store for him there; but he was still young, and care does not weigh down youth very often. Besides, he enjoyed the company of his camp mates so much, that for the time being the woods boy felt supremely happy.

This sort of work continued until the sun

had reached a position so near the zenith that they knew it must be close to the noon hour. And as their muscles had for some little time now, been feeling more or less sore, because of the constant labor, it was decided as usual to take a rest.

They would not let a chance pass by to have a fire going, even though the day had turned out quite warm. With such vast quantities of easy burning pine all around them, and Amos just wild to always take care of the fire, which he dearly loved, of course, they could not resist the temptation; and soon a crackling blaze was sending up its cheery song, such as has bolstered up the spirits of many a lonely camper all over the known world; for the fire is certainly one of man's finest servants; but like some other things, a very bad master, once it is allowed to have its own head.

About an hour and a half afterwards, the voyage was resumed, though none of the boys paddled with just the same vim that had marked the start. It was now more in the nature of pure grit that carried them steadily along; the pleasure had mostly petered out during that hard dash of the morning.

And as the afternoon shadows began to lengthen perceptibly, it might be noticed that they were more frequently mentioning the fact that this place or that seemed to offer pretty fine prospects for a night's lodging, though thus far no one openly advocated bringing the day's run to a close.

There were parts of this section of country where the great Overton Lumber Company had its numerous squads of men busy in the winter season, cutting timber, which, however was getting more and more scarce in the peninsula of Michigan every year.

It chanced that there was a rival company, also a big corporation, which, being exceedingly jealous of the success attending the work of the Overton, never tired of trying all sorts of games calculated to run the other out of the district. Teddy amused his camp mates many times, when sitting around the fire of nights, by relating how his father managed to outwit the owners of this rival concern on more than a few occasions, when they came to loggerheads.

And the men were almost as bitter toward each other as their employers; so that each, winter there were one or more regular battles

when the Overton loggers chanced to be cutting within a few miles of the rival camp.

"We've all got to clear out of this before a great while," Teddy would remark, doubtless echoing the words he had heard his father say; "because the available timber is getting less and less every year. That's what makes things so warm between the two companies, you see. Amos, here, used to work for the Combine once, and he knows what underhanded tricks they keep on trying to play, with the idea of forcing us out of the State, so as to leave things to them. But it don't work. My dad is some fighter himself; and with the law back of him, he just laughs at threats. But sometimes it makes mother afraid that they may do something desperate. Once a shot was fired at him, and the bullet clipped a piece out of his hat. Never learned who did it; but dad always believed it was a thug hired by the other company to scare him a little. But we're still here on deck, and this year expect to cut more timber than ever. Might as well get our share of it while the stuff lasts."

The three paddlers kept up their steady work, as the sun headed down into the western sky.

"How about those clouds over yonder,

Teddy?" asked Dolph, when the afternoon was possibly two-thirds gone. "Looks a little like rain, don't you think?"

"Where?" ejaculated the other, eagerly, as though he just welcomed a chance to call a halt upon the day's doings. "Well, yes, to be sure they have got a sort of ugly look. P'raps we'd just as well draw in at that point ahead, and make things snug for the night. Because we've been favored with good weather up to now, mustn't make us think we're always going to have the same. You never know what's going to come up in a night; and for that reason I always make it a point, even when things look as peaceful as they could, to secure the canvas of a tent, just as if I knew a terrible storm was going to break on me. Got left once, with my canvas carried high up in the branches of a tree, just through pure carelessness; and it served as a lesson I'll never forget. Head in, Amos; we're going to land there under that leaning tree. Looks like a dandy camp site, with all those extra big trees around. And honest, fellows, I must say I'm pretty near played out with fighting that pesky current all the live-long day. Here's where we find rest. Hurrah for the next camp! for every new one is the best, you know!"

CHAPTER III

THE JOY OF CAMPING OUT

To tell the truth, none of them showed any signs of disappointment because the labor of the day was done. It was no child's play, urging the canoes against the volume of water the flowed down the Manistique on the occasion of their voyage. And as they had come out for fun, and not to earn a living with the paddle, the boys knew when they had enough.

So, after bringing the two boats ashore, they drew them partly out of the water at a place that seemed to have been just designed for that very purpose by a kind Nature, as the beach was shelving, and sandy too, for a wonder.

It was quickly decided just where the tent should be erected. There were a few general rules governing this part of the daily programme, which all of them knew by heart. First of all, it was necessary to select ground that was not on the dead level, so that in case of a rain during the night, the inmates of the

tent would not find themselves knee-deep in a flood. And with those clouds hovering in the southwest, they felt it wise to make assurance in this respect doubly sure on this particular night.

Then the camp must be pitched away from any sort of swampy patch, which could not only breed mosquitoes by myriads, but prove malarial as well. And having an eye to the picturesque, the boys always saw to it that they could arrange the front of the tent toward the water. It was so pleasant to look out, and see the little waves dancing in the moonlight, as well as hear the musical gurgle so dear to the hearts of all those who love the great Outdoors.

And last, but not least, the tent must be within a reasonable distance of the two canoes. There was no particular reason to suspect that any damage might happen to the craft, either from accident, or the malicious designs of evil-minded persons; but since they must depend solely on the mosquito boats, as they are often called, to carry them over the course they had charted out, and the walking was not at all to their liking, it behooved Teddy and his camp mates to keep an eye on them during the periods

of their resting, between sunset and dawn.

Each one of the three had his regular duties to perform. While these were sometimes changed around, so that things might not become too monotonous, still, as a rule, Teddy and Dolph saw to erecting the tent, while Amos lugged the plunder from the canoes, packing it into camp, and after that started a fire.

Amos dearly loved a fire. He seemed to be one of those boys who can sit for perhaps a solid hour, staring into the snapping blaze, with a rapt look on his face; just as though he saw pictures there that gave him infinite satisfaction. Who has not enjoyed this pleasure to some extent, while surrounded by the primitive forest; unless you have, you do not know one half the joy of living?

And after the fire was burning briskly, Amos was ready to attend to almost any thing that chanced to come along. If either of the other boys happened to be fishing he wanted to prepare the catch as it was brought in; so that sometimes Dolph used to declare that the trout flopped right from the water into the fryingpan; the span of their existence between the two was so brief.

But tonight they did not think of fishing,

though Dolph cast a wistful eye along the brink of the river, and mentally noted several likely spots which he meant to try in the morning, if the fates allowed. But with those threatening clouds spurring them on, it was decided that they had better get supper over with as soon as possible.

"No telling," Teddy had remarked, with a grin, "but what we're in for a stormy night. I wouldn't be surprised to find the lot of us holding on to the guy ropes of this tent around midnight, like all get-out, to keep the bally thing from kiting up in the trees. Then again, there may be no wind, no rain, nothing at all. You never can tell. A fellow has just got to be *always prepared* when he's camping out; or sometime he'll get caught napping, and have a healthy old time hustling to save his chattels."

Amos knew how to cook, for he had filled that position, or rather as an assistant, in a logging camp one winter. But of course, the rough fare the husky timber choppers need, differs vastly from such food as the sons of rich men would be apt to take with them into the woods; and Amos had to learn a few new wrinkles, under the tutelage of the others, who were experienced hands at such things.

Doubtless the woods boy had never in all his life sniffed coffee that had the delicious aroma of that high-grade Java; and when it came to tea, Amos, who had up to this time believed that to be a concoction only meant for old maids, discovered that a cup of fragrant Ceylon, made in the only proper way, was simply unequalled as "refresher," after a hard day's work.

This is the way he went about making it; and any boy who cares to get the best out of things, would do well to remember the simple directions.

It would have been better if the campers had possessed a teapot made of crockery but since that could never be thought of, since it was apt to be broken, and would weigh too much, they had to use the next best thing, which was one made of pure aluminum.

Taking this, when the water had come to a boil Amos poured a little in the tea pot, to heat it, and then dashed it out. Then he put in the right quantity of tea, which in their case for three was a heaping teaspoonful; after which he poured a small quantity of the boiling water over it, and set the pot near the fire, where the tea could "steep" or "draw."

Not more than seven to ten minutes later, he filled it with the hot water, and the tea was ready to use. A very simple formula, but essential if the best results are wanted.

Of course, some readers might scoff at paying so much attention to small things; but nearly every lad who has camped out, as so many thousands of Boy Scouts are now doing for the first time every summer, discovers that half the pleasure of the outing springs from such little things being properly done. No efficient and painstaking scout master will think of allowing his boys to do things in a careless, happy-go-lucky way. And once they learn the pleasure of knowing the *right* methods, there is no fear of them doing anything else. A boy who knows better will turn up his nose at coffee improperly made, and shame the careless cook into decent methods.

Besides the tea, the three camp mates had what Teddy called a "canoeist's delight." It was really a stew or "hodge-podge," being a mixture of several "left-overs" from previous meals. There was some corned beef hashed up, some Boston baked beans, a little canned corn, and a few pieces of bacon, with the balance of the drippings that had not been

thrown away, but preserved in the can the corn had come in. And with healthy appetites backing them up, the three boys were ready to agree that never did any dish at the family table satisfy them one-half so well as this wonderful concoction.

The chances are, that had it been placed before either Teddy or Dolph when at home, with a snowy tablecloth on the table, and silver and cut glass around, they would have sniffed at it suspiciously, and ordered it taken away at once. But it was different here. Their looks were more than a few times directed toward the largest sized kettle in the outfit, which had been used to cook the mess, as though their one fear was whether there would be enough for a third helping all around.

Teddy took considerable pride in that aluminum outfit. He had paid a round sum for it, too. It was intended for six people, because Teddy said that there was never any knowing how many might sit around the campfire on occasion; and being a big-hearted generous fellow, he was bent on all having enough.

The several kettles all nested in one another, as did the cups; and with the numerous other things comprising the complete outfit, it

made an appearance to quite take the eye of a camper.

Amos kept them well shined too. He did not like to see the aluminum discolored, and was forever polishing the kettles and coffee and tea pots with a preparation that came with the outfit.

"The biggest mistake we made," declared Teddy, as, having finished supper, they sat around, helping Amos clean up, " was about Amos here."

Dolph looked up quickly, a puzzled expression on his face; and even the woods boy smiled as he waited to hear the other explain; though he knew only too well that Teddy Overton was too fond of him to say anything mean.

"How was that?" Dolph asked.

"Why, I should never have thought of allowing Amos to come along without his fiddle, as he calls his violin," the lumberman's son said. "He thought it might be in the way in the canoe; but I know he misses it terribly. I've seen him sigh when he sits there, looking into the fire; and every time I've known what was on his mind. He found his fingers just fairly itching to hold that bow of his, and work it across the strings."

"Why, I didn't know Amos played the

violin," remarked Dolph, looking interested.

"Well, he doesn't—only the fiddle. They'd laugh to have a fit if you called it anything but that in a logging camp. And Amos used to be the most popular boy all through the winter, when the men were out in the snow woods cutting timber. He had to play for them every single night. They never seemed to get tired of hearing Money Musk, Arkansaw Traveler, and all those old pieces. And I tell you, Amos can just make his fiddle *talk*. He had it along when we spent several weeks in these pine woods before; and night after night we used to have a regular musicale by the light of the fire. Why, I've seen the little chipmucks come stealing along, with their ears cocked up, as though they were taking it all in; and one night a raccoon fell off the branch of a tree, nearly on top of Amos. I always said that the music had made him dizzy, it was so sweet. But there, let's drop that subject. It makes Amos homesick, I guess, to remember how he won't be able to touch a fiddle again for a whole month."

An hour later, and the three boys were taking things easy. The storm clouds did not seem to have crept up any farther that they could see, and as yet it was a question no one could decide, as to whether they would

be visited by a storm during the night, or not.

Amos has been getting another armful of wood to throw down near the fire, so they would have plenty, if it was thought advisable to keep the blaze going, for frequently these Michigan summer nights feel pretty cool around about two o'clock; and it is nice, if one comes out to take a look at the weather, to see a cheery fire going.

With the wood still in his arms, the lumber camp boy bent his head in passing the others; and in a low but very distinct voice uttered a few sentences that gave both Teddy and Dolph a thrill:

"Don't jump, or show any signs of excitement, either of you," was what Amos said in a whisper, "but there's a man hiding behind those bushes just above our boats; I saw him duck down as I came nearer; but I never let on the least bit that I'd glimpsed him. Better just change your sets a little, so as to be nearer your guns, boys. And when you're ready, Teddy, give the word, so I c'n grab up mine. I don't like the looks of things, that's what."

All of this Amos muttered while he was rustling the wood, and laying it down piece by piece, in a heap near the fire.

CHAPTER IV

AMOS GIVES WARNING

"Wonder if he's alone?" Teddy remarked, in a low voice to Dolph, as he hitched himself along a few inches nearer the spot where his Marlin shotgun rested against a tree.

"But what under the sun can he want, spying on us this way?" asked the other, who was in the Michigan pine woods for the first time, and not so well acquainted with things as the lumberman's son.

"We'll soon find that out," remarked the other, in a louder voice, as he saw that Dolph could easily reach his own foreign made weapon. "Are you all ready, boys? Then catch on!"

Each of them snatched up a gun. There was not a sign from the vicinity of the bushes mentioned by Amos. Could it be that the other had made a blunder, after all? Had his eyes been blinded with so much looking into the fire, that he mistook some stump, or the remains of a log, for a man?

Teddy gained his feet, the others following his example. Three guns were brought to bear, covering the suspected spot.

"Come out! Show a leg; or we might take a notion to send a shot in there!" called Teddy, in a belligerant tone, making a threatening motion with his gun at the same time.

Immediately the bushes stirred. Then a tall and brawny figure came into view, that of a red-bearded man, clad in rough attire, as became a woods nomad. In one hand he gripped an old-fashioned gun, something like that of Amos'. But just then he was busily engaged in holding it up, as he tried to make the Indian "peace sign," by exposing the palms of both hands as well as he was able.

"Hold on, boys; I wouldn't do nawthin' rash, if I was you. I'm only too willin' ter kim into camp. Jest snuck up ter find out who an' what ye war. Happens that thar be lots o' hard characters aroamin' those woods hyarabouts; an' a decent respectable man hes to be putty keerful who he makes up with. I jest seen ye was all ter ther good, when ye called me."

He kept on advancing as he spoke in this strain.

Teddy had seen many just such rough

looking men among the scores of husky loggers employed by his father. He knew it was never safe to judge a man by either the clothes he wore, or his general appearance. Some of the hardest looking of them, upon closer acquaintance, would turn out to be big-hearted fellows, and as honest as the day was long. Then again, there was just as strong a chance that the same fellow would prove to be a scoundrel.

In the woods, men have to know each other before they become friends. Looks go for little, and words less. A man is what he proves himself to be.

Teddy was only a boy, and he had not rubbed up against a hard world after the fashion of Amos Simmons. And yet he certainly did not like the looks of this big man any too well. There was that in the other's face to tell only too plainly his love for strong drink; and being a strictly temperance boy himself, Teddy had little use for any one who was addicted to liquor.

Besides, he could not help but think there was something mighty suspicious about the manner in which the man was sneaking about their camp. Why should he crawl up, and lie there in those bushes, just as though an-

xious to listen to what the boys were talking about? If, as he said, he wished to make sure that they were decent campers, and not lawless persons, why, a single look at their canoes, and the boys themselves, must have told him that. There would be no need of all this caution; unless possibly the man might be a fugitive from justice, and suspicious of every party he met, thinking it might represent a sheriff's posse come to hunt for him.

The thought was not particularly pleasant to Teddy. He determined to keep his Marlin within easy reach while the giant was in camp; and he sincerely hoped the stranger might not take a notion to remain with them over night.

Perhaps he had had evil designs on some of their property—the beautiful green canoes that must look particularly inviting to any one tired of tramping through the endless pine woods; or could it be that lovely aluminum set of cooking utensils that was piled up in plain sight?

Teddy noticed that the man had his eyes fastened almost greedily on the gun which he himself was holding; why, he did not even seem to waste a glance upon the more expensive weapon which Dolph sported. And that

would seem to prove that he knew a good thing when he saw it. Indeed, since he himself carried an old-fashioned gun, no doubt a substantial up-to-date weapon must appeal to him, as a hunter.

The fellow saw that they no longer made any threatening motions. He showed his cool assurance by dropping down on the ground, not a great distance away from the fire; and sniffing the air in a way that could have but one meaning. He was hungry, and would like to have something to eat.

Woods hospitality is no respecter of persons. If a hungry man comes into camp and asks for a bite, common decency compels one to feed him, even though later you expect to order him on, at the muzzle of your gun.

So Teddy made a motion to Amos, which the latter easily understood. He started to make a pot of coffee, knowing that the man would never drink tea. Besides, Amos deliberately opened another can of corned beef, which he expected the giant would entirely devour, since he must be possessed of a tremendous appetite.

There were crackers, and some left-over biscuits which Amos had cooked on the preceding day in a little make-shift oven. All

these he began to set out before the man, before another word had been said.

It was not considered polite to ask any questions before the edge of the stranger's appetite had been taken off. The first thing Teddy inquired was very naturally in connection with his identity.

"Would you mind introducing yourself to us?" he asked, as he watched the terriffic inroads being made on their stock provisions; while Dolph was figuring on just how many days their larder could stand such an onslaught.

"Me? I'm Gabe Hackett," remarked the giant, with a quick glance toward Amos. "Used to be logger onct; knowed Amos Simmons, too, when I worked fur ther Woodstock Company a cupple o' years back. I been about everything thar is—trapper in winter time, takin' nigh a thousand muskrat pelts one season; timber cruiser, a skirmishing through new fields lookin' fur wood that cud be bought up by my company; trader; spruce gum collector; honey harvester, whar the bees they lays up a store o' the sweet stuff in holler trees. Reckon I 'bout near been all thar is for a honest man ter make a livin' at, up hyar in the Michigan woods."

"And what are you doing now?" asked Teddy.

The man started slightly, and gave the other a quick look; but evidently he was reassured by the manner of his questioner, who appeared to be solely seeking knowledge, for the inquiry was made in good faith.

"Right now I'm tackling a new dodge," he chuckled. "I wouldn't tell everybody, 'cause thar be some fellers as'd take advantage o' me; but I kin see that you ain't built that way. Why, I'm hunting roots jest now."

"Roots!" echoed Dolph, greatly interested because it happened that he was himself more or less interested in botany, and had even gone out on an expedition in search of medicinal roots with a professor of a Cincinnati college, whom his rich father thought a good bit of, and patronized to the extent of sending him to Europe each summer to study.

"That's it, younker; wild ginseng, golden seal, an' all them kinder things ye know, that brings good money, if on'y ye happen on whar they grows. Swamps ain't too planty up this aways; down in Indiana, now, whar I kim from, why they used to be jest heaps o' them weeds, but in them days nobody ever

thort they was wuth picking up. I hed an ijee o' hiking back thar; but a letter tole me the place was jest cleaned out o' every root, and that farmers was aplantin' ginseng by the acre."

At least the information was interesting. It might be true, or on the other hand, Gabe Hackett was possibly inventing this plausible excuse for his presence in that neck of the land. Teddy went on to ask a few more questions.

"And have you met with any success at all; p'raps you might show us some of these same roots. I've heard a heap about them, but wouldn't know one from another, though my chum here, Dolph Bradley, from Cincinnati, knows something about—what is it, botany, or rootology or what?"

Gabe shrugged his shoulders, as he replied, with his mouth half full of beef:

"Reckons ye'd never know what they was like, if so be ye had ter depend on the amount I've been able ter pick up, this far. Why, I ain't never set eyes on a thing wuth takin', and that's the truth. But I got an agreement ter meet up wid a feller by the name o' Crawley, as sez he kin pilot me ter whar we kin git jest piles o' that wild ginseng. Hopes as how

he ain't mistook it fur somethin' else; 'cause I needs ther money right bad. I gotter try an' show up at his shack afore mornin' too, wuss luck, else I'd like ter stay with ye, an' heve another shake at that prime coffee in ther mornin'."

Teddy and Dolph could not help exchanging a sly look; they were so glad to hear this last bit of news. It would have been very unpleasant having such a guest all night long; and his presence must have necessitated a constant vigil being kept. Indeed, so far as that went, Teddy was already of a mind that they would be wise to stand guard; for the very fact of his being somewhere in the vicinity, possibly with a boon companion of the same stamp, was enough to make one uneasy with regard to the safety of their belongings.

Happening to glance toward Amos, who had not been saying a word all this while, Teddy caught him winking one eye, and making a suggestive motion with his head. He guessed instinctively that the woods boy wished to find a chance to speak with him aside, where the visitor might not hear.

Dolph had taken what the man had said about the roots as Gospel truth. He was

trying to squeeze some information out of Gabe; and the other on his part seemed endeavoring to dodge the same by cautious replies, so as not to expose his blank ignorance in the matter too much.

So Teddy found an opportunity to stretch himself, and get up from his seat, as if tired of sitting. He had noticed that Amos was no longer near the fire; and on glancing toward the twin canoes, saw him bending over one of the small, dandy craft, as though examining some scratch that he had noticed before.

Teddy walked in that direction. He knew that he was followed by the eyes of the visitor, who must have considered it a little odd that the boy persisted in carrying his gun along with him on such an occasion. But however that might be, Hackett did not see fit to express his disgust in words, though he may have frowned some, and gritted those strong yellow teeth of his in an ugly manner.

Reaching the vicinity of the canoes, Teddy pretended to be as deeply interested in the supposed scratch made by a snag as Amos was. But when their heads came close together Amos took advantage of the opportunity to say softly:

"A bad egg, that Gabe Hackett, Teddy, believe me! Tell you about him after he's shook the roost, and gone about his way. Wouldn't set anything past him. Watch your gun, and everything else while he's around. Why, he'd steal a coffeepot if he had half a chance. Used to be the cock of the walk once at the lumber camp; but since then he's slid down the ladder some, I'm telling you. Hunting ginseng, he says; but I'd rather believe he's bein' paid by that Woodstock Company to foller *you*, and find out what the son of the president of the Overton Lumber Company is doing up in the pine forests; and that's what!"

CHAPTER V

THE ROOT HUNTER

"Well," remarked Teddy, softly, "what you're telling me doesn't flabbergast me one little bit. I just guessed that much from looking at the fellow, and hearing him talk. We'll keep an eye on him, all right; and if he steals anything from *our* camp this night, why, he's welcome to it, that's all. But we'd better act like we had only come over here to examine this boat, and see how bad a mark that snag made in the varnished side. He's got his eye on us all the while; I can feel it."

"Righto!" replied the woods boy, cheerfully, his mind relieved, since he had given his friend and employer proper warning, so that the burden was no longer on his shoulders.

A few minutes later they walked back to the fire, engaged in discussing whether the snag "bite" would prove serious at some future time; and if so, should they cover the spot with a piece of canvas, brought along for mending purposes.

Hackett watched them suspiciously, and seemed to strain his hearing in the endeavor to make out what they were saying. He seemed relieved upon catching the burden of their talk, as though it proved that they had not been discussing him while away.

By the time he finished eating, there was nothing more in sight. Dolph was of the opinion that the giant's capacity was of such an unlimited nature, that if given an opportunity he could have lessened their stock of provisions alarmingly, before calling a halt.

"Must say that I never seed such a dandy outfit as ye boys kerry," Gabe was pleased to remark, as he looked enviously around him; "canoes that jest take me eye; guns sech as I never handled in all my life; and ther cutest cookin' things as was ever got up. Must take a heap o' hard cash ter buy sech things. An' thet coffee, say, will I ever forgit it? Like as not the taste'll stick with me forever. Ain't nawthin' hardly I wouldn't do, if so be I could airn the money ter buy sich coffee. P'raps ye wouldn't mind leavin' me the name, an' fust dollar I find rollin' up hill, hang me if I don't invest the same in it. I could do with little else, if I got a drink like

that. It beats any old pizen whiskey I ever swallered."

"That's where you're right, Gabe!" remarked Teddy, quickly; "and if a lot of our men only thought the same, and carried it out, they'd be better off for it. Perhaps you've guessed it before, but I might as well tell you that I'm Teddy Overton, the only son of the president of the lumber company that's a rival of the one you used to work for."

"Yep, I guessed it, an' why—'cause in the fust place ye're the image o' yer daddy; and then agin, I see ye onct at the store," the visitor went on to say.

Then, although he had known this fact from the start, was there some hidden reason why Gabe had not said a word about it?

They went on talking for a while, the man evidently in no hurry to leave his comfortable seat in order to once more take up his walking through the pine forest.

Teddy could not but notice how often those greedy eyes rested on his gun; or it might be something else belonging to the outfit. Plainly Gabe Hackett was wishing some great good fortune might throw a chance in his way to gain possession of some of these things.

And Amos thought he saw more than that, as he continued to watch the burly former logger out of the tail of his eye. He had just mentioned to Teddy a suspicion that was creeping through his mind; and sitting there, the boy kept following it up, trying to make ends meet, yet never seeming quite able to do so.

He wondered why Gabe should look toward Dolph so many times, and always with a sudden little tightening of the lips. If it had been Teddy now, Amos could understand, and believe that the unprincipled man might be plotting some harm to the son of the lumberman who defied the Trust; but Dolph was a stranger in these Michigan woods, his home being in faraway Cincinnati.

Could it be barely possible, Amos wondered, that this rough man knew about the father of Dolph being a man of almost unlimited money, one of the big millionaire manufacturers of the thriving city on the bank of the Ohio; and was he even daring to lay some bold plan, looking to kidnaping the boy, to hold him for a ransom?

Lots of people would say that such things, while being done frequently in Italy, Greece, and such Old World countries, were just im-

possible in up-to-date free America. Why even Amos knew it was just to the contrary. He read the papers every chance he could get; and many a time had he discoverd where Italians, or others, had taken to these methods, with the idea of forcing people with money to divide with them.

There was that case of the Cudahy boy, for instance; and numerous others of like boldness. Oh! no, such things are not at all confined to Europe. They are being planned and executed right in our own country, every week. The only question that staggered Amos was how such a small-minded fellow as this giant, could ever engineer a scheme like this. But perhaps he may have backing they knew nothing of; and that there were wheels within wheels. Dolph might be made to disappear, just to make it look as though Teddy Overton's abduction were in the ordinary nature of things; when in truth it was all being done to force the lumber company to seek new fields, and leave this region to the opposition.

So Amos was wrestling with a pretty big proposition as he sat there by the fire, listening to the man talk, and hoping to pick up a few little clues from what he said, that might lead to disclosures.

It all came back to Amos later on, under entirely different conditions; to give him new chances for anxiety.

The hour was getting rather late, and still Hackett lingered on, loth to once more continue his lonely tramp. He said he was waiting for the moon to rise; but even after the battered remnant of the heavenly luminary put in an appearance over the trees across the river, he made no movement looking to immediate departure.

"Why do you suppose he keeps hanging on so?" Teddy managed to ask Amos, aside, as they chanced to enter the tent together for some purpose.

"P'raps he wants you to ask him to have another little snack?" suggested the woods boy, with a chuckle.

"Well, he'll wait a long time, then, I tell you," complained Teddy. "Why, that fellow could eat us out of house and home in three days, and then not half try. Did you ever see such a mouth? He takes a bite that would be three to me."

"Huh! I cooked for him one winter," remarked Amos, as though that circumstance ought to tell how much he knew concerning the capacity lof Big Gabe to stow away pro-

visions. "Kept us busy, right along, too, I'm promising you. But we'd better get outside again; he's that slick he might pull the wool over Dolph's eyes, and make away with a package of our coffee."

When they came out, greatly to their delight they found that Gabe was on his feet, stretching his six feet three.

"Hate ter do hit the wust kind, boys," he was remarking. "You all hev been so kind to me, I'd like ter stop over jest till mawnin', so'ds ter hev another drink o' that fine coffee. Don't s'pose now, he could spare a feller one leetle cupful o' the same? I'd take it handsome now, sure I would. An' it'd help me git over the miles I gotter go afore mawnin'; jest ter smell it every little while'd help right sum."

Teddy jumped over to the mess chest. There was a can full of the ground coffee in this; and besides, he calculated that they had an abundance, and to spare. Even if they had to go on short rations, if the giving of a cup of the pulverized berry from the South Seas could help hurry Gabe off, he was willing to endure the privation.

And so he found a paper bag to pour the fragrant stuff in. When he handed this over

to Gabe the big ex-logger sniffed at it with what was intended to be an expression of bliss on his bearded face, rolling his eyes at the same time heavenward to signify his thanks.

"That's the stuff, young fellers! Never seed the like, give ye my word for hit. I'm glad ye writ me the name o' the brand, an' tells me whar I kin git the same. I'm agoin' ter hev that coffee arter this, or know the reason why."

He folded the paper bag, and thrust it in the outer pocket of his coat; though Amos afterwards remembered seeing the corner of the packet sticking out.

Shortly afterwards Gabe took his departure. He gave one last look around ere doing so. It might be to impress the appearance of all those fine outing arrangements in his memory, so that he could recall them at some future time, when sitting at his lone camp fire; or on the other hand, possibly he wanted to know just how the camp was laid out, for some other purpose, not so honorable.

But the boys were glad to be rid of him.

"Hope we never set eyes on Gabe again," remarked Teddy, after they had seen him pass out of sight, up the river.

"Well, since he seems to be heading in the same direction we're bound, we might run across the man again," remarked Dolph. "But honest now, between us, Teddy, I couldn't swallow all he said about hunting roots. You see, the man doesn't even have an idea what wild ginseng looks like; and as for golden seal, he would pass it by every time, judging from some remarks he made. Now, what would such an ignorant man want, hunting valuable medicinal roots up here?"

"But if not that, what is he after then?" queried Teddy with a frown on his young face, as though a faint suspicion had even begun to trouble him.

"He knows you are the son of Mr. Overton, the president of the lumber company; and he admits that he used to work for the opposition. Perhaps he's still in their employ, Teddy; perhaps he means to do something to you, something that will give his company the whiphand over your father."

It was Amos who said this; but Teddy laughed at such an idea. He declared that the most they had to fear from Big Gabe was his thievish propensity. Possibly he might be sorely tempted to come back, and try to loot

the camp. His actions had shown them that he was envious of the fine guns they carried, as well as all those other things, the like of which the man had never seen before.

"I'm going to put in a couple of shells of the finest bird shot I've got," he went on to say, grimly; "and whichever one is on duty must carry my Marlin. Then, if our friend does come creeping around, we'll pretend that we think it a bear or a cat, and blaze away. He'll get his jacket dusted, and limp a little, maybe; but he won't try that dodge again, I reckon."

"A good idea," declared Dolph; and even Amos grinned; for in imagination he could see that ill-natured giant, who had always been the bully of the logging camp, going limping away, grunting with the pain of the fine shot that Teddy kept for summer woodcock shooting in the brush, where close shots were the rule.

They sat down to talk a little before making arrangements for the night; because both Teddy and Dolph were curious to hear what the woods boy knew concerning the past tempestuous life of Big Gabe.

And Amos, on his part, was quite willing to tell. His recollections of the giant were

not at all pleasing, for doubless the boy must have more than a few times felt the heavy hand of the man who, for some years, had been reckoned the biggest bully among the Woodstock loggers.

As they chatted, they kept their eyes con-constantly on the alert; just as though Hackett would ever think of creeping back while the camp mates were on the alert, rather than wait until they had entered the tent to rest.

CHAPTER VI

EVIDENCE THAT TALKED

"Now tell us about Gabe, and how he came to be run out of the Woodstock camp?" asked Teddy.

"Why, it was this way," began Amos, without the slightest hesitation; "he'd been known as the bully for years and years. Many's the man he knocked down, and beat up terrible like, just for crossing him. They were that afraid of Gabe, that when he told a silly story everybody just roared. And I take it there ain't anything to beat that, to show how one man lords it over twenty. But his time came," and Amos snickered, as though even the recollection of what he had witnessed gave him the greatest pleasure.

"I suppose a bigger man than Gabe came to camp; and when set on, just up and took him unawares?" suggested Dolph.

"Took him unawares goes," replied the other, "but as for the rest, just listen. You saw how Gabe, he looked at me lots of times uneasy like. Guess he knew I'd be telling

you all about his fall, after he went away. Mebbe that helped to hurry him off, too, because I guess he ain't never gotten over being touchy on that sore spot. Notice that he'd had his nose broke, didn't you?"

"Why, yes, now that you mention it, there was a crook to it. Did the new bully do that when he hit Gabe?" asked Teddy.

"It was like this," continued Amos, soberly. "We had a little Swede named Larz, the quietest and most peaceful man you ever saw. Nobody had ever seen him lift a hand to hit anything. He used to do whatever he was told by the rest, and since they took him to be just a good-natured fellow, why I guess they imposed on him a heap.

"Well, one night Gabe, who had been drinking, and was just wild for a row with somebody, after trying all he could to get some of the men to fight, picks on Larz. I think he struck him, and said something that the Swede didn't like one little bit. Just how he did it, nobody ever knew. They heard the sound, and saw Big Gabe measure his length on the floor, his head striking so hard that it must have made him see stars. He started to get up, and was knocked flat again. And before Larz was done, he'd made the big

coward, who turned out to be only a bag of wind, apologize to him before the whole shouting crowd.

"And after that, of course, Gabe never dared stay in camp a day. And he quit the company too. They called Larz the Terrible Swede after that; but the man became just as quiet as ever, and refused to take the place vacated by the bully. That was about two years ago; and I haven't set eyes on Gabe till tonight. But I did hear he was doing all sorts of things, from shooting game out of season, to netting bass when the game and fish warden was far away and selling 'em in the towns. And now you know all about him, as far as I can tell you."

Of course, both the other boys laughed heartily at the idea of that husky logger being whipped by a mild-mannered, inoffensive man half his size.

"These Swedes can go the limit when they get their mad up," Teddy remarked. "We have a number working for us; and such dare-devil fellows you never saw. Why, they think nothing of risking their lives in a log jam; and hardly a year passes but what a number of serious accidents do occur to them at one time or another. Sometimes it's a

tree falls on a man; then again a slip of the ax cuts his foot terribly; and in spring, when the freshet comes, and the logs start down, you just ought to see what goes on. They're a hard lot, it's true, but a braver batch of men it'd be impossible to find."

"I'd have given a lot to have had a picture of that little scrap," remarked Dolph, who was fond of taking snapshots with a kodak he carried.

"Well," continued Amos, "you'd have had a fine chance at the time little Larz was sitting on Gabe, and pounding him for keeps, until he made him roar out that he'd had enough, and took back everything he'd said. I'll never forget it. Gabe won't either, though he never went back to get satisfaction being afraid that there were too many of that logging crew who had a bone to pick with him."

"Yes, and I suppose nine out of ten believed they could down him, after the little Swede had shown them the way," added Dolph.

"Now, about keeping an eye on our stuff tonight; how had we better arrange it?" asked Teddy.

"I could stay up on the watch," remarked Amos.

"Yes, one-third of the time, and that's all," the other quickly observed. "You had it even harder than either of us, paddling against that current; because there were two in our boat to change about. And you've got to have some rest, as well as us. So here is what we'll do; divide up the time between now and dawn into three parts. I'll stand guard the first watch; then I'll wake up Amos, and he'll surely promise to give you a punch when his time is out. Get that, fellows?"

"Suits me all right," declared Dolph; "and I don't want any funny business, either, about getting me up. I'd be as mad as a wet hen if Amos lets me sleep on, and in that way cheated me out of my rights. We agreed when we started out on this trip it was going to be share and share alike, and no favors shown. Shall we crawl in now, Teddy, and leave you to yourself?"

"Yes; but remember to take my gun, everybody. He seemed to like it better than yours, Dolph," the lumberman's son went on to remark.

"Showed his good sense, that's all; I'm not stuck on this gun half so much as I used to be. If it goes back on me again, I'll

throw it away after this trip, and get one like yours, Teddy. Come on, Amos, it's us to snatch a few winks, while our brave chum mounts guards over our possessions."

Dolph was undeniably tired enough to welcome the chance for some hours' sleep. And it seemed to him that his head had hardly hit the pillow, which consisted of a bag filled with the same kind of stuff that constituted their beds, hemlock browse, stripped by hand from its attendant stems, than he lost consciousness.

He was suddenly aroused by a tremendous bang; and although for the moment Dolph found himself unable to place himself, some sort of intuition caused him to feel for his gun, and crawl hastily out of the tent.

Amos had been just ahead of him, and was on his feet as Dolph appeared.

"What is it; more cats invading us?" demanded the latter, when he saw the figure of Teddy just beyond the fire, in the act of half raising his gun, as if tempted to shoot again.

The other was laughing as if there might be something of a joke.

"No cats this time," he replied; "unless you choose to call two-legged thieves by that name."

"Whew! did he come back, then?" gasped Dolph, as he suddenly remembered their unwelcome visitor of the earlier evening, and the suspicion they had entertained as to his thievish propensities.

"I heard a sound as of somebody or *some thing* creeping through the bushes," declared Teddy, "and making as sure as I could of the direction, I let one shot go."

"Did he yelp?" demanded Amos, grinning as he remembered the fine, dust-like shot which the owner of the repeating gun had said he meant to use.

"Well, I didn't hear anything like that," admitted Teddy. "If he got a dose he sure knew how to keep a tight upper lip. But I felt certain I heard a patter of feet on the pine needles, like somebody scooting off in a big hurry. I was just thinking I'd like to give him another shot, when you came out and interrupted me. Now it's too late, because he's gone."

"But you ain't sure of it, are you?" asked Dolph.

"Well, I'm just dead certain that I heard those sounds; but of course it might have been some sort of animal pattering away.

Tell you what, we'll light the lantern, and take a look over there where I fired."

"Oh! do you expect to find drops of blood, or anything like that?" asked Dolph, with a little catch in his voice.

"Hardly, but we might be able to run across a trail; and Amos here is a pretty good hand at reading signs. Get some clothes on, both of you; then we'll take our lantern, and see."

Apparently, then, Teddy must have considerable faith in the theory he had advanced, since he was ready to put it to the test of an examination. So both Dolph and the woods boy hastened to get their missing garments, not being as warmly clad as they would like, when it came to standing around in that night air.

Presently they made their reappearance again, and better prepared to undertake the adventure which Teddy had proposed. He led them in a direct line, as though he had been taking exact note, and knew where to look.

"See here, you can see where my charge of shot cut through this lower limb of this tree, and sent a lot of green stuff to the ground. But I'm a little afraid, fellows, that we're

going to have some trouble locating anything like footprints; because, you see, the ground's as hard as all get-out around here."

Ten seconds later, and Teddy came to a stop.

"Now, as near as I could say," he remarked, "this ought to be about where he was at the time I fired. See anything, Amos?"

Carrying the lantern, the woods boy was carefully examining the ground. He scratched his head as he looked up.

"Nothing doing yet, as I can see," he remarked. "Just as you said, Teddy, the ground is as hard as the mischief right here. I might come on some sign where p'raps he broke off a twig when he hurried so, to get away. That's what I'm really looking for right now; something that'll tell there was a sneaker here."

"Hope you find it, then, Amos," said Teddy, who was more or less chagrined because he had not been able, thus far, to advance the necessary proof, in order to show he had not been mistaken in his belief; and that it really was a man, probably Hackett, whose retreating footsteps he claimed to have heard, after firing at random.

Amos did not give up so easily. He seemed

to just *feel* that there should be some sort of evidence at hand, if one did not tire hunting for the same. And so, holding his lantern low, he kept looking to the right and to the left.

All at once the others heard him give an exclamation; and Teddy felt that there was something akin to delight in the cry.

"Found the trail, have you, Amos?" he demanded joyously.

"No trail, but something better," came the answer. "Come here, both of you. What do you make that out to be?"

He pointed to some object on the ground. It looked like a bunch of paper. Teddy bent down and secured possession of the thing, which he instantly raised to his nose, as though anxious to make doubly sure.

"Some of our coffee, by the great horn spoon!" he exclaimed, "and since we know who carried this away, stuck in his pocket, why, it ain't a hard thing to guess now, is it, that Big Gabe came back, meaning to take away either one of our canoes, or, failing that, my dandy repeater here. Well, I only hope he carried off some of the charge that was in the barrel of this same gun."

Solemnly the package was passed around,

each of the others smelling of it, and then nodding an assent to the explanation advanced by Teddy Overton. The pretended hunter for wild ginseng had come back, filled with a desire to lay hands on more of that delicious coffee, or some of the other possessions of the camp mates.

CHAPTER VII

DOLPH MEETS SOMETHING

After they broke camp on the following morning, the three boys looked back to the spot where the tent had lately been pitched, and exchanged remarks concerning the strange happenings of the night.

"One thing I'm glad for?" remarked Dolph; "that storm concluded it didn't have a call in this direction. Thought I heard the far-away rumble of thunder once or twice, when it was my turn on duty; but I may have been mistaken. Anyhow, it's a pretty enough morning to eat."

"Oh! we've got plenty to be thankful for," laughed Teddy, who was feeling extra joyous it seemed. "Just think, if that big black-browed pirate had chosen to stay over with us, what a hole he'd have made in our grub chest this morning. As it is, we got off cheap by bribing him to go, with that cup of ground coffee; and as sure as you live, we even got that back again!"

"Do you think we'll make the lake by night

time?" asked Dolph, knowing that his chum carried a little chart of the peninsula about him, and was making good use of the same in planning their various moves.

"Ought to," Teddy replied, thoughtfully, "unless we peg out too soon, with this hard business of playing the spruce blade. I can tell better by noon. If we reach that point in front of the wild cranberry marsh, we'll be more than half way there, and should be able to cover the balance easy enough."

"I hope we do," Dolph went on to say.

"Now, you're thinking of trying those flies you brought along, on the bass they say inhabit that same lake, and of whopping size too," Teddy jokingly remarked.

"Oh! I acknowledge the corn," the other admitted, candidly; "because I do happen to be mighty fond of fishing at any and all times. If I can toss a fly, and get 'em, so much the better; but if they won't whiff at the feathered lure, why, then I turn to a frog, a minnow, artificial bait, a trolling spoon, and last, but not always least, the worm. I'm bound to get fish *some* way or other, if they're to be had."

"I wonder if we'll meet up with him again?" mused Teddy, as he sank his paddle

deep into the running water of the Manistique, and started the canoe up stream with a steady muscular push.

Meaning our big friend, Gabe?" inquired the other, following suit on his side of the boat; while Amos was already some forty feet in the van, being a most accomplished waterdog, for he had spent half of his life swimming and paddling around.

"Yes, Gabe. You see he headed upstream, and that would mean he meant to keep on the same course we are following. I'd rather it was the other way; for after my shooting at him, I'm afraid he'll feel uglier than ever toward us."

"Let him," remarked the good-natured Dolph, easily; "we've done nothing to him. Anybody would have a right to bang away, if they thought a bear or a cat was sneaking about the camp. And besides, he told us he was going off; so he couldn't very well make out that we knew it was him creeping back. For one I'm going to forget all about Gabe, except that at night-times perhaps I'll remember to keep one eye open for intruders that ain't cats."

"Too bad you didn't have a chance to snap him off," said Teddy. "He'd make a fine

addition to the pictures you're gathering, to show what happened to us on the trip."

"Gabe happened, all right. And we ought to keep that coffee, to present to him if ever he shows up again," Dolph went on to say, with a laugh. "I'd like to watch his face turn red, if it could get any more so than it is now, when he saw from our looks that we were on to his little wrinkle."

"Why not get a line out as we go along?" Teddy asked. "You might pick up a trout or two with an artificial minnow. There are lots of likely places. Perhaps there are black bass here, too. Most of the rivers in Michigan are full of gamey fighters. I've taken them out of the St. Mary's, that gave me all the fun anybody could ever want."

"Oh! I'm not so greedy as all that, or so fish hungry, either. I like to attend to my rod when I'm fishing, and not trust to luck to have the trout or bass hook himself. Besides, I've got about as much as I want, keeping tabs of your paddling, and making out to match you every time. We can camp on the lake a few days, and I reckon I'll have all the fishing I want."

"Well, I take it that's sensible of you, after all, Dolph. Some boys, and men too,

are so cracked over fishing that they get on your nerves. And as you say, paddling a canoe against this fierce current is about all any decent fellow ought to think of doing at a time. Look out for that snag; it's got an ugly point, too. Thought at first it was the head of a water snake sticking up; or a snapping turtle, mebbe. Did you ever see any one handle a paddle like Amos? I never could learn like that. He doesn't seem to make half the effort that we do, and yet see his boat, how it eats up against the stream."

"I suppose it's just because he knows how to do it, and where to place every ounce of force expended. Some fellows are born paddlers; and others seem to keep on bunglers all their lives. I guess I belong to that class," and Dolph Bradley laughed in his jolly fashion, as though he did not mean to let such a little thing bother him, at any rate.

"Oh! rats! when you know you're better than I am by several degrees. But then we've got little to be ashamed of as things go. Only Amos is away up in a class all by himself. Look at the way he dips in, will you, not a sound, not a drop spilled. That's the way to handle a paddle, when out at night after deer, with a jack; which way of hunting

is knocked on the head these days in most States though, because too many deer were wounded, and ran away, only to die. I never had a chance to try it, I must say, did you, Dolph?"

"Once, down in Florida, and when I wasn't hunting deer at all, but shining 'gators along the border of a swamp. I had a darky paddling me, and he pointed to a pair of eyes that he said must be a 'gator; so I banged away, having a scatter gun, and using buckshot shells. We heard something kick, and going ashore found a young deer lying there. I was put out, because I wouldn't have shot the little thing for any amount of money. And from that day to this I've kept the promise I made to myself right then and there."

"What was that?" asked Teddy, although he thought he could guess.

"Never on any account to shoot at something that I didn't have a pretty good idea as to what it was. Why, it gave me the creeps to think that it might just as well have been a little black pickaninny, staring out at our light; for there was a cabinful not far away."

Talking in this fashion, the boys beguiled the time away. Often Amos would hold up,

it might be to join in the conversation; or possibly to draw their attention to some interesting object that had caught his eye. For although Amos had lived his entire life in the woods, save the short time he chanced to attend school, he had an artistic temperament, and his eye unerringly picked out beautiful vistas through the woods, which seemed to fairly ravish his soul. Indeed, more than once Teddy had openly declared that if Amos failed to become a doctor, one of these days, as his ambition led him to hope he would, he would surely turn out to be a painter; for he discovered beauties in Nature that neither of the others noticed until the woods boy called attention to them.

They kept this constant motion up hour after hour. It was tiresome, of course, but then these boys had persistence well developed, and knew that if they hoped to camp that night on the lake, they must keep everlastingly at it.

And just before the sun had climbed to the zenith, or as near as he meant to ascend, Teddy gave a squawk of delight.

"There's the place we're going to spend an hour or two at, fellows, just ahead, yonder, where that tree bends down over the water.

"That's a point of land marked on my chart. Just back of it lies a big natural cranberry marsh, where the reds grow thick in the fall; but you see, it's so far from everywhere, that few of them ever get to market."

"I want to step back, and take a look at that same marsh myself," remarked Dolph. "Don't believe I ever saw a real wild cranberry bog, though I've been in one down in New Jersey near Barnagat, where they cultivated the berries. I was having one of those famous sneakboats built by an old bayman, and paid him a visit to try how it worked that fall, on the waters there, with a few ducks coming in. Going to land right here, Teddy?"

"Amos has picked out the best place; trust his eagle eye for seeing it. Run her up alongside his canoe. That's the ticket. Now, all ashore and stretch!"

It certainly felt good to be able to stand up, and get what Teddy called the "kinks" out of their legs.

As it had been decided to spend some little time here, seeing they could now easily reach their intended destination ere nightfall, Amos started a fire, meaning to have a pot of cheering coffee. Teddy busied himself about something that he had laid out to do,

while on the river that morning; and Dolph, to pass the time away, sauntered back, to find a way of looking over the cranberry marsh.

He came back presently, and began to take out a fishing rod, quite a stiff one in the bargain.

"What's up?" demanded Teddy, watching these preparations curiously. "Thought you said you didn't expect to catch a fish until we got to the lake?"

"Well, I don't," replied the other, chuckling," you wouldn't call frogs fish, now, would you?"

"Frogs! Oh! I see, you've discovered that the grunting we heard back there came from a colony of big greenbacks, eh? Well, I hope you've got some red flannel, or if not, then a red ibis bass fly along with you. They'll jump at it like hot cakes; and you'll nearly die laughing to see the circus that takes place when they find that they just can't let go. But I see you know all about it, because you've shortened your line to a foot, and fastened it around your reel handle. Going to put 'em in that covered bucket, are you? Well, good luck! A dozen saddles wouldn't be any too big a mess, Dolph. Call you when the coffee is boiling."

So Dolph went away, hurrying, for he was considerably excited over the chance to capture a mess of the frogs; because if there was one dish he was fond of, it could be set down as frogs' legs, nicely browned; why, in his mind they were better than the finest spring chicken ever grown.

Teddy went on with the task he had set out to perform; while Amos busied himself with his cooking fire, which of course differed from the usual big camp fire about which the canoe cruisers liked to sit, after their evening meal was over.

Amos found stones to suit him, and built a cairn that was something like fourteen inches wide at the mouth, tapering along until at the other end it did not exceed four inches. On this he could place both frying-pan and coffee-pot, if both were to be used. And in the cavity, he proceeded to coax a red fire by adding just the proper kind and amount of small fuel.

Not more than six or seven minutes had passed when the two boys were startled by hearing Dolph shouting wildly at the top of his voice; and they judged that he was coming toward the camp with all the speed he could command.

"Bear! Big black bear! and chasing after me! Hurry up, and bring a gun, somebody! Quick! he's right after me, I tell you! Whoop!" No wonder that both boys hurriedly snatched up a gun apiece, never looking to see whose these happened to be, and ran toward the spot from whence the cry for help proceeded.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WAY TO FISH FOR BULL FROGS

Here was a pretty how-dye-do; Dolph going innocently back to the cranberry bog to pick up a dinner of frogs' legs, and being chased by a savage old bear!

Somebody did get a move on, as Dolph had pleaded for them to do; everybody did, in fact; for Teddy dropped whatever he was doing, snatched up a gun, and put out as fast as he could run; while Amos, forgetting all about the chances of his fire going out just when it needed the most attention, followed close in the footsteps of his camp mate, also armed with a deadly weapon.

There was not the slightest difficulty in locating the scene of operations. The continued whoops of Dolph did that all right for them.

All at once the yells ceased, as if by magic, and a fear gripped the would-be rescuers that they were, alas, too late to be of help. Then they heard what sounded like a hysterical laugh, followed by the exclamation:

"Well, I'll be hanged, if that ain't a good one on me!"

That was Dolph's well known voice; there could not be the slightest doubt about it; and to judge from the fact of his actually uttering a sort of laugh, it seemed as though Bruin could not have eaten him up, as yet. Both gallant rescuers felt vastly encouraged, and emboldened to push right on.

Breaking through a fringe of bushes they were just in time to catch a last glimpse of a badly rattled black bear, putting for all he was worth into the adjacent scrubbery, and never looking back once to ascertain whether or not he was being pursued by the object that had so thoroughly frightened him.

Dolph was standing there, panting heavily, and yet shaking all over at the same time, either with nervousness, or an inclination to laugh at his late scare, possibly both.

"He's vamosed, has he?" queried Teddy, drily, though both he and Amos were conscious of feeling a broad grin creeping over their respective faces.

"Why, yes, seems like he has," replied Dolph, heaving a deep sigh of relief, "and I'm right glad of it. Honest to goodness, fellows, he made straight at me, and had on

his fighting face to boot. I thought it was a she bear with cubs; and you know they're always ready for a scrap. That's why I whooped it up like I did. I was a little bothered, I admit; yes, considerably so, if you will have it. Because, you see, I couldn't very well stand off a ferocious bear with one little fishing rod, could I? What if he'd grabbed that red ibis fly, was I to try and play him? Not much. All I knew just then was that I had a very important engagement in the next county. And while I was trying my best to keep it, I thought it my duty to send you fellows warning, so you wouldn't be scared when he bobbed in on you. And I couldn't seem to make up my mind which tree I wanted to climb, either; not that it mattered much, because black bears climb like monkeys. But anyway, whatever do you think made him take after me like that?"

"Mebbe he thought you wanted to steal some of his pets, the frogs," suggested Amos, pleasantly.

"Rather say he wanted to give you a try in a wrestle; these black bears have got a hug that will crack a man's ribs, if you let 'em get the right hold," was what Teddy advanced as his theory, but with a twinkle

in his eye that plainly proclaimed that he was joking.

"Seriously, now, Teddy, what do you think made him chase after me so? I hadn't bothered him, thrown sticks at him, or even said 'boo!' when he started straight toward me on the jump, making the queerest sounds you ever heard."

"Well, if you want my honest, unadulterated opinion," said Teddy, "here it is, I happen to know this same cranberry bog. It's surrounded on nearly every side by swampy ground, where you heard those big frogs tuning their bass notes. In fact, right here is the only way of reaching the bog dry-shod. A sort of natural causeway leads to it, so to speak. Now, Mr. Bear knew that as well as I do. He had used that same many a time in the past. When he saw you, he was scared, and wanted to get away the worst kind. You happened to be blocking his passage, and so he had to gallop toward you. He was grunting in fright, that's what caused him to make those queer sounds. Perhaps he hoped to squeeze past you. But one thing sure, Dolph, while you had a scare, that poor bear was the worse rattled of the two. Right now he is congratulating himself on having got off with his life!"

"There might be another around, because bears often hunt in couples?" suggested Dolph.

"Wouldn't be surprised; and I reckon there goes all our hopes of frogs' legs for dinner tonight," remarked Teddy, dejectedly.

"Well, I guess not," said the other, with a compression of his lips, "I see you snatched up my gun in your hurry. Let me have it. I'll keep it handy, and then I don't care a hang for all the old bears in Michigan. Who's afraid? Go back to your jobs, fellows, and many thanks for saving my precious life."

Laughing at his merry mood, Teddy and Amos did turn about, the latter running back, for fear lest his newly-started fire might have suffered during his short absence.

Dolph walked on into the cranberry marsh. He found that the ground was fairly covered with the plants, and that an abundant crop of berries seemed assured for the coming fall. Already in many instances they were taking on a pinkish tinge, although they would hardly be fit for picking before the first frost.

But a mere glance around was enough for Dolph just then. As he had said, a cranberry bog was not a new sight to him, though this chanced to be the first wild uncultivated one he had ever gazed upon.

Just now he had other fish to fry. Those big deep-toned bull-frogs had opened up again, and were loudly accusing each other of having had "more rum" than was good for them.

Dolph knew just how to go about it, and was presently having "more fun than a circus," as he called it. But evidently the frogs did not enjoy the picnic so much as the fisherman; but then, whoever considers what the feelings of the submerged half is, when in quest of food?

Discovering just where a monster was squatted on the bank, uttering sounds like the lowing of a bull, Dolph would creep up behind him, until he could glimpse his intended quarry. Then he would elevate his stiff rod, and allow that flaming bunch of red feathers to descend in front of the creature's nose. There would be a start, the bull-frog could be seen to half crouch down, after the manner of a sly cat, and then he would jump up at the tempting lure, which, of course, the poor silly thing believed to be the finest moth it had ever seen. After that it was ludicrous in one way to see how badly he wanted to let go, and couldn't. But Dolph wasted no more time, and quickly put an end to the acrobatic stunts of the hooked frog.

Then he would go on to the next serenader, whose song might prove just as much a symbol of his approaching end as that which the swan is said to give vent to, when death draws near.

So it went on, and the load Dolph was carrying kept on getting heavier; while his visions of a treat in the way of frogs' legs for supper kept advancing with each new capture.

When Teddy blew the conch shell as a signal that lunch was ready, the coffee having boiled sufficiently, on counting his prizes, Dolph found that he had just fourteen, almost five apiece.

He came staggering into camp with his load, to be greeted with much clapping of hands, and all sorts of suggestive gestures, which were calculated to tell what pleasure the other two anticipated from the results of his raid on the frog preserves guarded by that bear.

After they had eaten their noon meal, Dolph busied himself in preparing the catch. Of course he lacked some of the dexterity of the man in the French market, who can take off the saddles in such wonderfully fast time; but then Dolph manipulated his hunting knife with good results, and in the end the

load to be carried had diminished considerably.

"Fourteen splendid saddles," declared the pleased frog fisherman, as he gazed down at his catch. "And we'll have the finest dinner tonight either of you ever set your teeth into; I give you my word on that. Just wait, and get good and hungry. You can have your fill for once."

"How do you cook the blooming things?" asked Teddy, looking a little dubiously at the array of double hind-legs spread out, in what Dolph considered a most tempting way. "You see, I never yet have tried one, though Amos here says he has, many a time. But they do look kind of nice and clean, just like chicken breast."

"You'll say they are like the most tender spring chicken you ever saw," remarked Dolph. "Of course, there is a suspicion of fish about them, so you must remember that it's frogs you're having. How do I cook 'em? Why, exactly like we do trout. Sizzle out some salt pork, and have plenty of the grease, and piping hot. Then wet your frog legs, and roll them in the cracker crumbs. If you haven't any, corn meal would answer. After that, just let them get as pretty a brown

all over as you can; and then start in for a grand time. That's all. Just hold your horses, and see. You'll never hear an old granddaddy frog tuning up again, without smacking your lips, and looking around for something to spear him with."

After a while the cruisers of the Upper Peninsula once more started up the Manistique. The current was getting somewhat less strong now, and hence they did not have to fight quite so hard in order to shove their craft against it.

The time passed as usual. Now they indulged in an exchange of pleasantries, with more or less laughter, that sprang from boyish hearts not yet burdened with the cares and responsibilities of life. Then again they would sing some popular ditty, all of them having fair voices, that seemed to blend splendidly; for Teddy had a high tenor, Amos a baritone, while Dolph could come in with a pretty fair article of bass that added harmony to the whole, though he would never venture it alone.

The sun was now more than half way down its regular afternoon route toward the western horizon.

"We must be getting somewhere near

there," Dolph suggested, as he got on his knees, to change the swing of his stroke, but more because he felt dreadfully cramped sitting in one position so long.

"I was just thinking that way myself, and if I remember the lay of things at all, we ought to glimpse the lake inside of the next ten minutes. How about that, Amos?"

"I think the same way," replied the woods boy, nodding his head, and smiling.

"For one, then, I won't be sorry," declared Dolph, frankly. "My back's as humped as an old man's seventy years old; and one of my legs has gone to sleep so hard I'm afraid it never will wake up again."

"Oh! well, then I suppose Amos and myself will have to cook those frogs' legs, and make way with the entire bunch, after all," sighed Teddy.

"Wow! don't you believe it!" exclaimed Dolph. "Why, honest, I can feel a quiver in my dead leg right away. I'm good for my share, and I'm going to cook 'em too, just you make sure of that, my hearty."

"There's the lake!" cried Amos at that interesting juncture, and Dolph was so excited by the news that he tried to stand up in the canoe, spreading his feet so as to steady the frail craft, and came near taking a header

over the side, as one of his legs refused to bear his weight; but all the same he managed to shout:

"It is, for a fact. Three cheers for a camp on Manistique Lake!"

CHAPTER IX

ON THE SHORE OF THE LAKE

"Let's turn up this side, and keep right along for an hour," Teddy suggested, after the canoes had kissed the waters of the lake.

"What's the idea?" asked Dolph.

"Well, only a liking on my part to camp as much on the east shore of a lake as I can, when I have the choice," replied the other.

"But the storms generally come from the west," Dolph went on to say, "and if one hits you plumb in the face, it's kind of disagreeable."

"Hang the storms. One ge-lorious sunset over the water makes up for half a dozen blows. And then, on a hot summer night, it's nice to catch all the cool air that stirs."

"Perhaps you're right, Teddy. Anyhow, we'll risk it on your word. To tell the honest truth, I'm that hungry right now, I don't care a continental where we camp, just so Amos gets one of his bully cooking fires going."

"Oh! it's frogs' legs that tempts you!" scoffed Teddy.

Dolph smacked his lips as he replied:

"In fancy I can smell them now; and after you've had your first taste, chances are Amos and me, why, we'll have to spear our share out of the pan in a big hurry, for fear we won't get it. There's just one thing troubling me."

"What's that?" demanded Teddy.

"Why, there's only fourteen saddles, you see," Dolph sighed.

"Well, goodness knows that ought to be enough," laughed his canoe mate.

"But unfortunately it happens that fourteen doesn't divide by three."

"Oh! is that what you're worrying about?" Teddy exclaimed.

"Somebody can only have four saddles," Dolph went on. "I imagine the poor fellow's feelings when his appetite keeps on calling for another, and he sees his comrades holding up a tempting morsel on their forks, but none for him! It is a terrible thought."

"Make your mind easy, old fellow. Never despair. See, I'm game enough to offer myself as the victim. I'll take just four as my portion," Teddy cried out.

"I refuse to accept the noble sacrifice. We'll have to draw lots," said Dolph, with

an air of determination; while Amos listened to the humorous dialogue with a broad smile of appreciation on his face.

"But I mightn't like frogs' legs; I've never tried 'em before," insisted Teddy.

The other made a scornful gesture.

"No danger of that happening. You'll just adore them, and I know it. And we'll certainly have to draw lots to see who has to curtail his appetite."

"Oh! well, just as you say; I don't want to kick up any row in the family." Teddy concluded, with the resigned air of one who gives in in order to keep the peace, yet still clings to his opinion.

"You went and blew that horn on me too soon," complained Dolph.

"But the coffee was all ready," said Teddy.

"Yes, and I'd just discovered the granddaddy of all the bull frogs. He was sitting there, winking at me. And I could see he just loved queer red bugs that came down to dangle in front of his nose. I make it a rule never to disobey a call to dinner, and that's why I failed to get the fifteenth. Wish I'd gone back, now."

"There's the place for our camp, I guess," exclaimed Teddy just then.

Both of the other canoe cruisers united in voicing their appreciation for Teddy's selection. Indeed, it seemed as though Nature had taken especial pains to create an ideal site for a summer camp.

There were enough trees for shade, without interfering too much with their view of the lake. The ground had a gentle slope that promised them immunity from a flooded tent in case of heavy rain. And there was the clear water of the lake within reach, for all purposes—drinking if need be, fishing, boating and swimming.

Could anyone ask more?

There was the nicest little beach just in front, where the canoes could be landed. And as the three lads jumped ashore, they felt satisfied that the conditions could not possibly be improved on.

As they expected to stay in this camp for several days, it was only natural that they should go to some little extra care in doing things.

For instance, after the tent had been raised, Teddy and Dolph took hatchet and knife, and dug a little sluice in a crescent shape around the side that was up the slope. This was calculated to turn any water aside that might, during a storm, have a tendency to creep

under the tent, and wet the piece of canvas they always used as a "floor."

Then Amos, too, used extra care in building his stone fire place. They had a sort of gridiron arrangement along with them, which, composed of cross sections or bars, could be opened very much after the manner of the drawing arrangement used in some schools for copying designs.

When open it was very nearly two feet square, and yet it could be squeezed into the smallest compass imaginable when not in use.

Amos built his fire place to fit this "spider" as he called it. Once the arrangement was completed they could set the coffee pot and skillet on this frame without the slightest danger of an upset, such as so often disturbs the harmony of a camp.

Besides, once the fire got down to red embers, the bars of this grate were useful to hold pieces of toasting bread—when there was any in store.

And so, after all these things had been looked after, and the sun shone very red across the lake, Dolph was called upon to exhibit his skill as a cook.

When, just as twilight came stealing through the pine woods, supper was announced, Teddy was seen to sniff the heavily

charged air in a manner so full of eager appreciation that the cook felt constrained to call out:

"Remember what I said about drawing lots for the two extras."

He watched Teddy eagerly as the other forked his first "saddle," pulled it apart, and took his first bite. There were no words spoken; none were needed, since actions always speak louder than any language.

Teddy hesitated, and Dolph frowned; then suddenly a look of deep satisfaction chased away this cloud from the face of the cook; for Teddy was gnawing savagely at both frogs, legs at the same time, as though that single taste had set him fairly wild, and grunting like a satisfied porker, as he ate.

But three seemed to be his limit.

"Mighty fine, all right, Mr. Cook," he declared, "and next time set me down for a round half dozen; but just now I draw the line at three. It's a queer dish, you know, and a fellow had better go a little slow till he gets used to it."

"But that leaves an extra saddle, just like before. Don't you think you could get away with just one more, to save trouble?" pleaded Dolph.

"Not on your life. I've had enough, and

I know it. I don't want to overeat, and get a distaste for such a fine dish. Draw lots for the odd one, you and Amos. And I'll hold the straws. Long one eats my share."

It fell to Dolph.

"But you're welcome to it, if you really care for another, Amos," he said, generously.

The result of all this talking was that there were just *three* saddles left over. Dolph and Amos were stalled at four each.

"They were as fine as silk," declared the cook, as he wrapped the remnants of the feast in some clean paper, to be eaten for lunch on the following day, "but they were such whoppers, I just couldn't make way with more than four."

"Then I did pretty well for a beginner, didn't I?" asked Teddy.

"Oh! you're going to make the champion frog leg eater of the bunch," Dolph replied, with a laugh. "Why I only nibbled at *my* first taste, and it took me some time to really appreciate them. But you took to 'em as easily as a duck does to water."

They had a fairly quiet night, all told. A few mosquitoes sang around, and Teddy vowed he would have the net up another time.

Then a loon out on the lake uttered its

discordant cry several times, after the moon had arisen. But taken in all, the boys found little to complain of in this, their first night's camp on Lake Manistique.

When another day came, they knocked around camp for some time.

"Where's Amos gone?" asked Teddy, as he came up from the canoes, to find Dolph the sole occupant of the camp, and busy rigging up a fishing outfit, as if he wanted to try the bass in the lake.

"Oh! he heard me say I wished we had some honey for those fine flap jacks he made for breakfast," replied Dolph.

"And just like the bully fellow he is, Amos has trotted off to see if he can't discover a bee tree somewhere, eh? Well, I sure hope he does. I like honey pretty well myself, sometimes. Going to try the bass, eh, Dolph."

"I hope they take the ibis half as greedily as those big bullfrogs did. I couldn't ask anything better," replied the other, as he walked down to the canoes.

These had been completely emptied of everything but the paddles.

Teddy saw his chum paddle away, and watched him following the shore of the lake, gaily casting his gaudy flies in every shadowy spot.

"Hello! he's struck one, and a jim-dandy fish, too, if that bent rod stands for anything! Whew! look at him jump out, would you? That's the finest bass I've seen for many a day. Good boy, Dolph, you know how to manage the tricky thing. He didn't fall on the line, and tear loose that time, for you lowered the tip handsomely. Go it again, you fighter. Makes my fingers tingle just to see it going on. But one steel fly rod is all we've got along. Another time I'll take a turn at it."

He watched Dolph land three fish inside of half an hour.

Then something caught Teddy's attention at the camp, and he went back, only to return half an hour later.

Look as he would he could not see his chum.

"Like as not he's in one of the little bays," Teddy remarked to himself, "where the trees make a shadow on the water. Perhaps he's on the way back to camp. Guess I might as well—hello! now, I wonder what that is, swimming out there in the lake? I declare, it looks like—yes, it *must* be a big buck deer! I can see his antlers plain now! And he's heading to strike the shore over on this side, too!"

Chapter X

THE FIGHTING BUCK

After watching the progress of the swimming deer for a few minutes, a sudden idea flashed into the mind of Teddy.

"Wonder if I could work that camera of Dolph's now?" he exclaimed. "It'd be a bully good picture to get that buck swimming."

He hurried to the tent, and snatched up the little kodak.

Another minute and he had launched the second canoe, and was wielding the paddle for all he was worth. Teddy headed in such fashion as to intercept the swimming animal, and keep him from reaching land. It was not his purpose to attempt to do the buck any injury, simply to have some fun; though, of course, the animal had no means of understanding that.

Before Teddy had gone a hundred yards he discovered his chum in one of the small bays, still trailing his cast of flies over the water.

"Hi! Dolph! deer swimming! Come out,

and help have some fun with him," was what Teddy shouted.

And Dolph, apparently nothing loth, started to paddle vigorously, meaning to join the other as he came along.

The deer had taken the alarm, and changed his course. He was now headed so as to reach a tongue of land that jutted out into the lake.

But the canoes could move four feet to his one. Rapidly they overhauled him. Still, there was nothing for the buck to do but keep doggedly on. Plainly though, he was alarmed and "putting in his best licks" as Teddy said.

"I've got your kodak along," cried Teddy, as the two canoes drew close together.

"Good for you," Dolph replied.

"Thought we'd like to get a picture of the deer swimming the lake."

"Crack him off now, then, Teddy."

"I'd rather you'd manage it," said the other. "I might make a bad job of it, and never hear the end of the joke. Pull in a little closer, and I'll throw it over. Be sure and catch it now."

The change was successfully completed. And although neither of the boys dreamed of such a thing just then, it was fated to prove

a very fortunate idea on the part of Teddy. At least, it saved the kodak from ending its usefulness at the bottom of the lake.

"Let's surround him," suggested Dolph, after he had managed to snap off one view. "I'd like to get a closer shot at him."

"All right," agreed Teddy, ready for anything, "you go that way, and I'll head him off. How'd it do to catch hold of his short tail, and make him tow the canoe?"

"Great stunt for a picture!" declared Dolph excitedly.

What the buck thought about it, no one seemed to care. Teddy put on a little extra spurt of speed, and circled around the deer. Then he headed directly at the swimmer. The buck swerved a little, and Teddy, now crouched in the bow of his canoe, leaned forward.

"All ready for a shot, Dolph?" he shouted. The buck was swimming gallantly, and desperately, too.

"Now, snap away!" whooped Teddy, reaching down, and clutching the short tail of the deer.

What happened just then was never very clear to Teddy. The buck must have turned upon him, when insult was added to injury.

He heard the "click" of the kodak; then something rammed the frail canoe so furiously that Teddy went headlong into the lake.

Being a good swimmer, the boy instantly struck out. It happened fortunately that at the time he was only wearing a sleeveless tunic, also a pair of trousers and tennis shoes, for the day had turned out quite warm.

When Teddy arose to the surface, after his hasty dive, he shook his head in his accustomed way, to get the wet hair away from his eyes.

The first thing he heard was Dolph roaring:

"Look out! He's coming after you! He's a fighter, all right! Dive, Teddy, dive!"

And then, sure enough, Teddy saw the buck. For the time being the animal seemed to have forgotten how anxious he had been to reach the shore. Revenge was what he appeared to be after now. Teddy had placed an indignity upon him when pulling his tail, that no self-respecting buck could stand.

Teddy saw it was useless attempting to get into the canoe again, with that angry beast in full chase. The tables had turned, and it was now Teddy who was being pursued.

He was a good swimmer, but perhaps the deer was even better. So it seemed as if Dolph's suggestion might be the best after all. By diving under the water he would leave the vengeful buck in the lurch.

Just how the deer might have attacked him, whether with horns or hoofs, or both together, Teddy did not know. He did not stop to find out, but went down like a shot, meaning to swim under water for the floating canoe.

He must have made a pretty accurate, if hasty, calculation, for when he arose to the surface again, he was just behind his canoe, which had righted after tossing its occupant out.

"What's he doing now, Dolph?" called Teddy, when he could get rid of some of the water he had half swallowed, and draw in fresh breath.

"Going around in a circle trying to find you," came the reply.

"Head him off if he looks this way even. I've had all the deer hunt I want today," declared the boy in the water.

"All right, now; he's turned to the shore. I guess he thinks you've drowned," announced Dolph.

Whereupon Teddy grew bold enough to peep around one end of his canoe, and finding that it was just as Dolph said, he proceeded to climb in over the stern, by straddling the same, the only way a canoe can be entered from the water.

"Pick up both paddles, will you, Dolph? Well, can you beat that? I've had some queer things happen to me, but that's the first time I ever had a deer give me a ducking. Good joke on me, Dolph."

"You'll say so when you see the picture," chuckled the other.

"What! did you strike me off?" gasped Teddy.

"Just when you were going over," laughed Dolph. "Wouldn't be surprised but what it'll show what made the canoe turn partly over, because I saw the deer do it. There's the marks of his horns right now, where they scratched the green paint."

"Well, don't that beat all? I'm glad we met up with that old buck. Say, he's some scrapper, let me tell you. Look at him climbing out on the bank, Dolph! Aint he feeling proud, though? See him shake his antlers, and strike his hoof on the ground. You put it all over your Uncle Teddy, that time, old chap. I'll be mighty careful after this, how

I try and make a swimming deer tow me, while I'm squatting in the bow of a cranky canoe. There he goes. Good-bye, and good luck to you."

There was not a bit of resentment in Teddy's voice, as he waved a hand after the disappearing deer. He could give and take, and in his mind the buck had come out of the little affair with high honors.

"Guess I'll go in with you," remarked Dolph, after he had easily recovered the floating paddles, and handed them to his chum.

"Mebbe you think it ain't safe to trust me alone on a big lake like this, and in a boat that can act like a bucking broncho!" chuckled Teddy.

"Oh! I'm done fishing. Got all we can use, and they've about stopped rising to the fly too. Gamey fellows, I tell you, Teddy, all right."

"I watched you pull in a few, and saw that they were full of fight, all right. But that's always the way with Michigan bass. They never give up till they're all played out. I've had one on that jumped out of the water sixteen times, and only a two pound fish at that. Yes, that *is* a beauty, sure enough." as Dolph held up a splendid fish, "and I see

that you believe in knocking 'em on the head when you boat them, to end their suffering."

"The only way anyone should do," declared Dolph, earnestly. "I hate to see fish gasping their lives away in the sun. Besides, they'd flop all over and keep up the worst racket you ever heard. When you're fishing, you had ought never to knock the boat more than you can help. Sound travels through the water like everything."

"You never said a truer thing, Dolph, and I know it," declared Teddy, as they paddled for the camp landing place.

"Going to change your clothes?" asked the other, laughing again.

"Oh! I guess not, they can dry on me, all right. Laugh all you want to, Dolph. It's a good joke, that's certain. And I reckon Amos—listen, I wonder if that was him firing, and what he found to shoot at. Amos wouldn't dream of killing a deer in the close season."

"Not unless he was nearly starving, and needed food. But Teddy, somehow or other I don't believe that was Amos shooting."

"Why do you say that?" asked the other.

"Because I'm sure I heard *two* reports, one right after the other," Dolph went on.

"You mean that Amos only carries a single shot gun; but that's where you're mistaken, my boy. He took my Marlin repeater along. I told him to carry it the next time he went off."

"Still, the shots were so close together, one gun couldn't have made them, unless it was a double-barreled scatter gun. Perhaps we're not the only ones around here. We happen to know about Gabe Hackett, and he said he was on the way to visit a friend's cabin, a man named Crawley."

"Yes," said Teddy, "I know the man, too, and he's about as hard a case, when drinking, as Big Gabe ever could be, from what Amos tells us. Those two men are game poachers; that is, they shoot game regardless of the close season. Perhaps they've knocked over the buck that upset me? That could hardly be, either, for the shots sounded too far away."

"Anyhow, I hope our chum Amos doesn't fall in with them," remarked the other, as they jumped ashore, and drew the canoes up on the shelving beach.

And Teddy voiced the same wish, though not dreaming that there was any danger of such a thing happening to Amos.

CHAPTER XI

ON THE TRACK OF AMOS

When Amos failed to show up at lunch time the two boys did not think it odd.

"He's a determined fellow, when once he starts out to do a thing," Teddy remarked, as the two of them sat there, eating what had been provided. "And the chances are he's had to go further to find his bee tree than he figured on. We'll just put some grub aside and keep the coffee warm, because Amos does dearly love his coffee."

"I know another fellow who gave us to understand that he'd risk his immortal soul for such fine Java as this," laughingly remarked Dolph.

"Meaning Big Gabe," said Teddy. "That's right. But if his stripe of lumbermen could only drink more coffee, and less whiskey, it would be better for them. Some people say coffee is bad for the nerves, but it never makes men crazy, and want to fight, like the other stuff does."

An hour passed.

"No Amos yet?" asked Teddy, coming up from the canoes, where he had been doing something to fill in the cut made by the snag, under the impression that all such serious bruises weakened a canoe, and made it unreliable in case it was used in the rough water of rapids.

"Nothing doing," replied Dolph. "Kind of expecting him any time, though. Come here, and see how you looked taking that header."

"Hello! been developing a roll of films in your daylight tank, have you? And did they turn out good?" Teddy asked.

"Look for yourself; I've given them a hypo bath, and fixed them. Now they're being washed. That one with the teetering canoe, and you taking a backward plunge, is just immense, aint it, Teddy?"

"Well, that proves one thing, anyhow," the other declared, with a laugh, "I know now that I went over *backwards*. Couldn't just decide before how I did it. And as sure as you live, there are the deer's horns actually tilting the canoe."

"Great, ain't it, Teddy?"

"You never got such a picture before in all

your life, and I don't believe you ever will again. It beats anything I ever saw. But I wish Amos would come in," and Teddy frowned a trifle.

"Why, you're not worried, are you?" Dolph asked.

"Hardly that, but I can't help but think of those two shots, and wonder if they could have anything to do with his staying away."

Dolph made no reply, although, he, too, looked a little uneasy.

When more than another hour had passed, Teddy again approached the subject that seemed on his mind.

"It's sure queer we don't hear anything from Amos," he remarked.

"Three o'clock, and past. You don't think now, it's possible that Amos could have gone and got lost?" suggested Dolph.

At that Teddy laughed scornfully.

"That boy?" he declared. "Why you couldn't lose him anywhere in Northern Michigan. Take him in a balloon, and drop him down somewhere in the pitch dark, and I honestly believe all he'd have to do would be to smell the soil, feel of the trees, and tell right away where he was."

Dolph in turn laughed at that.

"Makes me think of a story I heard once about an old Nantucket fisherman. He always claimed that he could tell by the smell of the mud on the anchor, where they were, whenever they had to haul up in a fog. So one day, just to fool old Captain Jones, his men, while they were anchored in a fog somewhere off shore, took a handful of soil out of a box they had on deck, where the skipper kept some parsley growing, of which he was very fond.

"Hurrying to where he was sleeping they roused the old man by telling him that they had lost their bearings, and wanted him to tell where they were at, from the mud scraped off the anchor, and with that they clapped the soil taken from the parsley box under his nose. He took one smell, and then jumped to his feet wildly excited, yelling out:

"You lazy lubbers, you've let us drift ashore, and we've been anchored right over Mother Jones' garden!"

It was Teddy's turn to laugh now. But as the afternoon waned, his fears kept on growing apace.

"I don't like it," he would say, "it's so unusual for Amos to stay away like this, and when he only meant to he gone a few hours."

"But you say he couldn't be lost?" remarked Dolph.

"I'm dead sure of that."

"Then tell me, what might have happened to him, Teddy."

"Oh, one of a good many things. He may have met up with those poachers, and had trouble," the other said.

"Yes, that's always possible," admitted Dolph.

"Then again, some accident might have happened, Dolph."

"As how?" demanded the other. "Amos is a careful boy, and not the one to take unusual risks, like wanting a deer to tow him."

"That is right," Teddy continued, smiling, "but then even long headed fellows can sometimes meet up with accidents in the woods. A rotten branch might give way under him when he was climbing a tree to investigate a possible bee hive. And a tumble can break a leg, no matter if it is as stout as those Amos boasts."

"Still, I can't believe such a thing would ever happen to Amos," Dolph persisted in saying.

"Then there's my repeating shot gun—he's never really handled one, you know. While

it works like a charm for me, and I can't for the life of me see how anybody could ever make any mistake handling that gun, still, I admit I'm worried," and Teddy showed it in his looks.

"Had we better do anything?" asked Dolph. "I'm ready to follow out whatever plan you suggest."

"Oh! we'll wait another hour," Teddy replied.

"And then?" the other went on.

"If Amos hasn't shown up, I'm going to start out on his trail."

"You must let me go along, Teddy."

"Of course, wouldn't think of trying it alone. If the boy was in serious trouble, of any kind, mind you, it would be as well to have both of us there."

That was a long hour.

When it finally ended, both boys were ready and eager to start out. The tent was securely fastened up, so that if it rained no damage might come to their things. Teddy even hid away a lot of stuff in a hollow tree, so that in case thieves came they might not quite clean out the provision department. He also secreted the paddles, and thus in a measure guarded against having the canoes, now placed

ashore in the bushes, from being carried away.

"What if he should drop in after we're gone?" remarked Dolph, shouldering his gun.

"I've thought of that," replied Teddy.

"And prepared for it too, I wager, for I saw you writing a note," Dolph went on to say.

"Yes, which I'll leave fastened in this stick standing up, one end of which I've split with my knife. He'll be sure to see it the first thing," Teddy remarked.

"What did you say?" asked his chum and camp mate.

"That we were anxious about him, and had started out on his trail. If he came in while we were gone he was to stay in camp and wait for us. Could you add anything to that, Dolph?"

"I guess not. And your idea of keeping him here is a good one, too. Only for that Amos might start out to hunt us up; and so we'd all keep on chasing around in circles, no end of time. I'm ready, if you are, Teddy."

"Here is where I found when he went away. The trail is as plain as anything, too. No trouble about following that. We're off."

And with these words Teddy started. Indeed, they doubtlessly moved along even more

rapidly than Amos himself may have gone, because on his part the woods boy halted every little while to look around, and ascertain if there were any bees working on the wild flowers. Had he found such Amos was prepared to capture one that was already laden with honey, attach a white thread to him, and then let the insect go free. It would invariably head straight for the tree hive, for a laden bee *always* goes home directly, whence the saying of a "bee line."

Watching until he could no longer see the trailing white thread, Amos would have marked the spot. Capturing another laden honey gatherer he would attach a second thread, and let him loose.

And in this fashion would he draw nearer to the forest hive, until certain well known signs must have betrayed its presence to the honey hunter.

But evidently Amos was not finding any bees. At least, he seemed to make no effort to play this well known little game.

The afternoon wore away, and evening came on. By now the boys guessed they must be several miles from their camp on the shore of the lake; and so far not a sign of the missing comrade had they run across.

Both of them became more anxious. At Teddy's suggestion Dolph even fired three shots in quick succession. But though they strained their ears they heard no response to this recognized signal that should have had an answer.

"I'm afraid there's something wrong," remarked Dolph.

"And I've been feeling more and more that way for some time," Teddy said.

A minute later he uttered a low cry:

"Look what's that on the ground ahead of us, Dolph?"

The other gasped, fearing the worst; and then exclaimed:

"It's only what's left of a deer that's been shot here, and cut up."

"But our chum never shot it," declared Teddy. "See, here are the tracks of two men. Chances are, Amos saw them kill the deer out of season. And now they've made him go off with them, so he won't tell what he knows to a game warden. Here's a pretty kettle of fish."

CHAPTER XII

THE GAME POACHERS

Meanwhile, the woods boy was in trouble.

He had walked for several miles through the pines, packing that dandy little Marlin repeater belonging to Teddy, and really wishing he might run across a fighting wild cat, or even a panther, though these latter animals were seldom seen in the Michigan woods in late years. Anything in the shape of game that the law did not protect, but paid a bounty for killing—that was the height of Amos' ambition as he stalked along. For he wanted to see how it felt to use the gun he had always admired so much; and even a fierce lucivee would have been welcomed.

Of course, Amos did not forget for one minute what especial object had lured him abroad on this morning. He kept on the alert to discover traces of wild flowers, and their busy attendants, the little honey gathering, pollen scattering bees.

Strange to say there seemed to be a wonderful dearth of the insects right around that

particular section. Amos was at first surprised, and then nettled. He disliked to give any object up so easily; and when noon came it found him with his head still turned away from the camp, and without having met with any success.

Thinking he had better not go further in that direction, Amos began to circle around to the left. This movement would allow of his covering much new ground. Better still, if he kept on, he expected to eventually strike the shore of the lake, at a point, say a mile or two from the camp.

It was a nicely arranged plan, but circumstances which he had never forseen, and over which he really had no control, caused it to miss fire.

There was undoubtedly a whole lot of luck or accident in the way things came about; but then that can be said with regard to nearly every event that occurs. Think of the western railway train that was five minutes behind time, arriving in sight of the station just so that the horrified passengers saw the cyclone tear that building at which they should have been stopping, into a thousand bits. That happened just the other day, out near Omaha, Nebraska.

All of a sudden Amos, sitting on a log and resting, heard a deer jumping. Then came two shots, one close on the heels of the other.

A wounded doe ran out of the scrub and fell dead on the ground not twenty feet away from the boy. Then he heard voices approaching. Amos would have shown his good sense by taking to his heels just then, and vanishing. He did nothing of the kind, only stood there, and waited to see who it was shooting deer out of season, and a doe at that. And like as not Amos would quickly repent him of this unwise, even foolish lack of caution.

Two men came hurrying forward. The first one Amos recognized as Big Gabe Hackett and he guessed that the other must be Jared Crawley—yes, he remembered the fellow, though some years had passed since last he saw him.

Just as they reached the deer they discovered Amos, and both men showed signs of confusion, which quickly changed to anger.

Almost before the surprised Amos realized what was happening, the giant poacher had leaped over to his side, and snatched the precious Marlin out of his hands.

After that they could not have driven the

woods boy away, for he simply must have refused to return to camp minus Teddy's pet gun.

"What ye doin' hyar, ye game warden spy?" growled Big Gabe, lifting his fist, as though tempted to strike the boy; but at least Amos did not quail; he looked the other straight in the eye as he replied:

"I was trackin' around in hopes of findin' a bee tree for the boys; but just concludin' to give it up and head for camp, when this deer dropped. Somebody shot her, but I didn't see who fired, so it ain't any of my business."

"Oh! it ain't, hey?" roared Gabe, "wall then, I'll make it yer business," and with that he placed the repeating gun so close to the deer that when he fired the sound was so muffled that it could not possibly have carried any great distance; which was why those in the camp heard no third discharge.

"What'd ye do that for?" demanded Crawley, who was a tough looking old customer, weaker in disposition, perhaps, than Big Gabe, but, Amos believed, every inch as much a rascal.

"So he'd have a hand in downin' the deer," said the big poacher, with a cunning

leer. "Now he dasn't peach on us, Jared, "cause Amos, he's in the same fix himself. And say, this leetle gun handles great. I jest been a lookin' fur somebody ter make me a present o' a six shooter like this."

"Well," said Amos, stoutly, "I guess you're off your trolley about that gun. Nobody ain't giving it to you. It belongs to my friend, Teddy Overton, and he's carried it so long he wouldn't let it go for a heap."

"Oh! he wudn't, eh?" growled Big Gabe, frowning.

"And you know what his father is; he ain't afraid of any man or any Lumber Trust on earth. Well, the boy's a chip of the old block. You try to keep his gun, and see what happens to you. I guess you'll think some black hornets are singin' around your head in no time."

Perhaps it was wrong for Amos to taunt the poacher after this fashion. But then Big Gabe, being at the time in a nasty, reckless humor, the chances are he would hardly have backed down anyhow, once he put his hand to the plow.

He looked at Amos reflectively.

"Say, them fellers think a heap o' ye, I guess, mebbe, Amos?" he remarked.

"They're mighty fine boys," admitted the other, falling into the trap.

"And like as not," continued the poacher, a grim smile beginning to creep over his red face, "if they thort as how you was hurted or lost, now, that Overton boy and the Bradley one, son o' Mark Bradley the rich manufacturer, would sally out, and try to find ye. Ain't thet so, Amos?"

Amos knew it was. But he declined to commit himself. Truth to tell, a terrible fear had suddenly taken possesssion of him. Evidently these two desperate lawless men had been talking over some wild scheme that had for its main object the demand on Mr. Overton or Mr. Bradley, for ransom money, after the two sons of the wealthy men had been made prisoners.

Once the ransom was in their hands no doubt the two men had in mind an asylum across the lake in Canada.

That was why a dreadful fear suddenly sealed the lips of Amos. But Big Gabe read his answer in the look of alarm that shot athwart the boy's face. He laughed harshly, and then went on to say:

"Git busy an' cut up the deer, Amos. none o' yer puttin' on airs now or I'll be tempted to use that on ye," and he lifted one

of his tremendous fists that had knocked scores of men down in the days when Big Gabe "ruled the roost" as the bully of the logging camp.

Amos was no fool. He could be discreet as well as brave. And truth to tell, a wild desire now began to seize upon him to learn in some fashion just what the plans of these two conspirators might be, in order that he could make them come to naught, and save his chums.

By running away he would lose all chance of finding this out. And besides, he was apt to take unnecessary risks, because he honestly believed Gabe would shoot after him, using the shot gun in order to simply lame him.

And then, there was Teddy's prized gun—how could he have the face to go back to camp and tell how that had been plucked from his hands without his being able to make the least resistance?

So Amos making the best of a bad bargain, took out his knife, got down on his knees beside the slain deer, and started to cut the carcass up. The two men sat there on the log Amos had recently vacated, watching his labors, and occasionally exchanging a remark, generally to the effect of how enjoyable it was to have some one to do all the dirty work.

This was no new business to the woods boy.

He pretended not to pay any attention to what was said by the men. But he saw that Hackett kept the Marlin gun across his knees all the while, allowing his own old weapon to lie unheeded on the ground.

"Now tie up all them parts in the skin, so ye kin tote 'em, Amos," ordered the despot, when the boy announced that he had taken all the choice portions.

There was nothing to do but grin and bear it, though Amos doubtless thought his lines had fallen in anything but pleasant places.

"Pick her up!" ordered Big Gabe, as he arose, tucked Teddy Overton's gun under one arm, and his own under the other. "We got about two miles ter kiver; an' me 'n Jarda here, bein' kinder rusty in the j'ints, ain't as well able ter pack loads acrost kentry as when we was young an' nimble guides. Head straight into the south, Amos. And I hopes as how ye're too sensible ter think of tryin' ter run away, 'cause I'd hate to pepper ye with this ere scatter gun; but I swear I will if so be he tries to skin out."

Amos knew the man, and he believed him. So for various reasons he decided not to make any attempt at flight—just then, at any rate.

He wondered where they were taking him. Somewhere or other they must have a camp.

Then he remembered Big Gabe mentioning the fact that Crawley had a cabin somewhere.

"I wonder if it could be that old place they used to say was haunted?" Amos was whispering to himself, as he walked along, now turning a little to the right, and again to the left as his captor directed, and often the butt of coarse ridicule on the part of Big Gabe, who thought the boy was only a little coward, after all.

He did not dream what was passing through the mind of Amos.

After a while the boy felt sure they must be making for the cabin of which he had heard more or less talk, but which he had never seen.

And sure enough, when the sun was only half way down toward the horizon they came in sight of an old cabin, nestled in the midst of the wildest growth of bush; as though Nature was trying hard to heal the scar made by man's hand.

"Hello! thar, Sallie, open up!" shouted old Crawley; and somewhat to the astonishment of Amos, the cabin door opened to reveal the slender figure of a girl about the twelve years of age—a girl with tawny golden hair, a rather small, pallid face, and the biggest blue eyes he had ever seen in any one.

CHAPTER XIII

SALLIE

Amos was taken aback when he saw the girl standing there in the doorway of the old cabin in the pine woods.

He had supposed that when he set that greasy old ruffian, Crawley, down as a vagabond, without a single good quality in his make-up, he was only doing him justice and to discover that he actually had a decent trait in his miserable character, was quite enough to shake Amos's faith in his own ability to read men.

This was when he saw Crawley actually bend down and kiss the girl. It made Amos shudder, too, somehow, when he thought of those tobacco stained lips coming in contact with the red ones of the frail girl.

At any rate, Amos thought, if this were his child, she surely could not have any of Crawley's nature in her; for he looked the drinking scoundrel the boy knew him to be, while somehow Amos thought of angels he had seen in dreams when he saw her yellow hair and big blue eyes.

So this was Sallie! She seemed somewhat surprised to see a boy with the two men and turned those big eyes reproachfully upon Crawley, which action somehow caused him to squirm uneasily, and say hastily:

"Oh! we ain't agoin' to kill the little fool, Sallie. All we wants is ter keep him close here a few days, so he can't meddle in other people's bizness. Ye see, it ain't safe for greenies ter be aroamin' the woods, when fellers is ahuntin'. They don't know how ter handle highfalutin' guns, an' are apt to do damage ter pore hard workin' root gatherers like Gabe 'n me. Set that meat down in a corner, ye gump, an' don't stant thar astarin' at my Gal. Sallie, sense ye got sech a fine fire, I reckon we might's well cut off some o' this fresh mutton, and make a meal o' it. Gabe, spose ye keep one eye on our new friend hyar, an' if he tries ter vamose, wing him."

The girl said nothing, but she evidently understood that these two evil men had some wicked game in prospect. Amos saw her shoot a pitying glance toward him, and somehow he was not sorry that he had been brought to that cabin.

Of course, the presence of that splendid repeating rifle made her think the young owner

must be well to do, and she knew from experience that such people always had a certain stamp of value in the eyes of her unscrupulous parent, who was forever trying to collect the living he said the world owed him.

Amos had by this time recovered from his great surprise and was beginning to wonder whether he might not sooner or later reap some benefit from this new situation.

The girl looked as though she could not possibly enter into any of the wicked plans of her father and his equally unprincipled partner; perhaps Amos might prevail upon her to even set him free, once the chance presented itself.

And the more the boy looked upon the slender little figure, almost pitiful in comparison with the bulky frames of the men, or even his own stocky form, the less he found to regret in his apparently desperate situation.

Why, he had never imagined that such a sweet child existed; for in all his experience he could not remember having looked upon a face that appealed so to the best that was in him as Sallie's seemed to do.

Boy-like, he wondered what she thought of him. He knew that his appearance could not be very prepossessing, especially after carrying that meat so long.

Now and then he saw her glance curiously at him. When she was not looking Amos ran his fingers through his hair. He even stepped over to a tin basin that held some water, and washed his hands. The sight of spots of dried blood on them disturbed him. Somehow, he thought she might not like to see it.

Sallie went about her task of cooking the fresh venison with the air of one who knew all about the little wrinkles connected with such work; no doubt she had prepared her father's meals for a considerable time, perhaps since her mother died.

The man she called father was an ugly citizen when aroused, or drinking; and Amos found himself wondering whether he ever descended so low as to actually strike this child, when the brute nature was on top.

Somehow the very thought of such a thing gave the boy a cold chill. He found himself shutting his teeth hard together, and muttering to himself what he would do in case he ever happened to see that heavy fist raised to strike that patient face, in which the eyes shone as Amos had seen them in an innocent fawn; only hers were blue like the skies, instead of hazel.

At least he could see no sign of any mark or bruise about her face, and the man really seemed to entertain some sort of affection for the girl, the more remarkable because no one would ever suspect him of being capable of any such feeling.

When early supper was ready, they sat down at a rude table, a couple of benches supplying seats for all.

Amos found himself opposite the girl, and of course he could not help keeping his eyes upon her a good deal of the time. She was the only object worth attention; and the two rough featured poachers looked like beings from another world beside Sallie.

The men talked little, and then it was of ordinary subjects. Evidently they did not mean to discuss any secrets while the other two were alongside.

Fom time to time, though, Gabe would ask him something in connection with his camp mate, Dolph Bradley. While the woods boy might have felt like declining to supply them with the information they wished, a glance into the red eyes, and the scowling face of his questioner, was enough to convince him that such defiance would only be the height of folly. So he answered as best he could.

Sallie seemed to be taking more interest in him as the rude meal progressed. She even spoke to him once, asking if he would like to have some more of the meat, or some stew from the big iron pot.

If Amos missed the splendid "Kababs," which Dolph knew so well how to prepare, as he had eaten it in canoeists' camps, he at least had no reason to complain on the score of hunger; for he ate most heartily; showing that it takes something more than the shadow of possible coming trouble to seriously affect the appetite of a healthy boy.

After the meal Gabe stood in the doorway of the cabin smoking his pipe, and apparently listening, as though he half expected to hear something.

While he stood there he laughed as though pleased. Amos, too, had been keeping his keen ears on the alert, and he also caught the three gunshots fired by Dolph at the suggestion of Teddy.

Amos was a little surprised that they could hear the shots, which seemed to come from the quarter where the men had shot the doe, and captured him. It gave him additional reason to believe that in coming to the cabin they had for some reason or other followed a more or less circuitous route.

Pretty soon, then, these wretches would be setting their trap to catch one or both of his friends.

Would he be helpless to prevent the springing of the same?

Amos, filled with a new zeal, began to observe everything about him, with the idea of utilizing the knowledge later on, when perhaps it might prove valuable. He marked the position of the open window; saw where the men placed their guns; figured in his mind just how many steps it was to the door; noted how this same barrier seemed to be secured with a stout bar; and in numerous other ways fortified himself for action, with a view to outwitting his enemies, should so much as half a chance arise.

And whenever he thought of Teddy, somehow he could not despair; for in this time of trouble the lumberman's wide awake son seemed to be a tower of strength. Why, Amos even begun to pluck up hope that he might even be able to outwit these plotters at their own game.

He felt that the two boys must have started out to look for him; those three shots told that much. Remembering the ability of Teddy especially as a woodsman, Amos be-

lieved they would experience little difficulty in following his trail up to the place of his encounter with the poachers.

From that point Hackett had made sure that the job would be easy. He meant to "toll" the other boys into a trap, just as a little barking dog is used by gunners along the Chesapeake Bay, to gambol on the sand, and so excite the curiosity of beds of ducks that they keep pushing in a little further to observe, until within reach of the death dealing guns.

Would his chums wait until morning before taking action?

Amos knew better.

If they headed toward the cabin, following the trail by the aid of torchlight, or using the lantern, why they might arrive inside of a few hours.

It was dark outside now.

The girl had lighted a candle, and this, with the fire, dimly illuminated the interior of the cabin.

The two men were huddled over by the door, talking in low tones. Amos would have been glad to have caught a part of what they were saying, and even did incline his ear that way; but their voices only sounded like a rumble, and he soon gave up all hope of hearing anything worth while.

Then he became aware of the fact that the girl, washing her few dishes at the table near by, was observing him with something like a glance of amusement in her blue eyes.

Amos forgot his own troubles for the time being. He only wished Sallie might take a notion to come a little closer, so he could talk with her.

It would seem as though his desire must have impressed itself upon his face in some way, for sure enough, Sallie did edge in his direction, still busy with her dish pan, and the suspicious looking crockery that had served them at supper.

She cast a quick glance toward her father, as if to see whether either of the men were paying the slightest attention. But they seemed to be "head over ears" interested in what they were discussing.

"Won't you take pity on me, Sallie and talk a little?" said Amos, in a low tone. "Who are you, anyway?"

She smiled back at Amos as she replied swiftly:

"Why, Sallie Crawley, don't you know?"

"Is Crawley your real, true dad?" the boy went on to ask.

"Why, yes, of course; don't you know that?" she answered.

"I never heard he ever had a wife or child, when he used to work in the lumber camp; and least of all, a girl like you," Amos went on, growing a little bolder.

"Well, he has," she replied. "I'm like my mother used to be, because she had yellow hair and blue eyes, dad says. He often looks at me kinder queer, and shakes his head. I guess I make him think he sees her again."

"Does he take you around everywhere with him?" Amos next asked.

"Oh! no. Sometimes now I stay with my grandmother at the Soo. But dad, he gets lonely once in a while, and comes after me. I always go, 'cause I promised *her* I'd never, never give him up. And then, dad, he hates to cook for himself—all men do, I guess."

"But Crawley has a pretty hard reputation —excuse me for saying it, Sallie—"he's an awful rough man, at best. Are you happy with him?"

She hesitated before replying to this. Amos could see a shadow cross her thin face; but evidently pride must have come to the rescue, for presently she tossed her yellow mane back and said:

"Why, I s'pose so—least ways as happy as I ought to expect. There is just heaps of

trouble in this world, anyhow, whichever way you take it, and everybody must just grin and bear it. Dad is good to me—sometimes. Then he's ugly too; but that's only when he's been having too much whiskey. That's an awful thing to change a man. I hope you don't drink it, boy."

"Not a drop for me, as long as I live," declared Amos. "But see here, Sallie, it ain't fair for me to know your name, and you to just call me 'boy'. I'm Amos Simmons, and I've been in the lumber camps of Northern Michigan, cookin', and doing all what-not, for just years. Now, I've got a couple of mighty fine chums not far away, one of them named Teddy Overton, and the other Dolph Bradley."

She uttered a little exclamation.

"I've met Teddy Overton once; he's a splendid boy," she said, hastily.

"Well, I guess that's just right," remarked Amos. "Now, you see the other, Dolph, he's from Cincinnati. Everybody knows that his father's rich. Why, they've got oodles of money. I kind o' think your dad and Gabe, there, know it; and right now they're a hatching some measly plan expectin' to separate Dolph's folks from a lot of that spare

cash. And that's the reason they pulled me in like they did."

He kept one eye on the men while saying this.

The girl looked surprised.

"Oh! then it ain't *you* they're meaning to hold up?" she asked.

Amos chuckled, as though amused at the idea.

"Precious little good I'd do them," he said. "They might keep me till their hair turned white, and nobody'd pay a nickel for lettin' me go free. But they're sharp, I tell you, Sallie. They know them boys are bound to look for me. Don't you see, it's going to be a trap, and I'm the bait. And unless you or me warn the boys, they're just bound to tumble right into it!"

Amos watched her thin face closely when he advanced this "feeler," as he chose to call it. Sallie started, and looked very serious.

"Me?" she said, slowly.

"Why, yes," Amos went on, "you wouldn't want to see a nice feller like my friend Dolph, kept here like he was a dog, would you, Sallie; till somebody sent on some money? If he could be warned, I guess, with Teddy's help, he might manage to keep clear of the trap."

"But—what are you saying, boy—you want me to stand up agin dad, and upset his game? My! but he'd be awful mad," she said, reflectively; and her face looked as care-worn as that of a grown woman, Amos thought.

"Well, it might save him from going to prison, that's all," he said, "and I guess you wouldn't like that to happen to him."

"Oh! no, of course not. You see, boy, I promised mother to stand by dad right along, and try to get him to quit drinkin' and being tough. He could be decent if he just let that stuff alone, and kept away from that Gabe Hackett. When him and me are alone, and he ain't got no drink, he's good. I keep hopin' and hopin'; but it's terrible hard work. I sure don't know how it's goin' to end. Sometimes I'm afraid of what he does."

There was a almost whimper in her voice, that cut the boy cruelly.

"He don't hit you, I hope, Sallie?" he said, glancing in the direction of the two men.

"Oh! no," she answered, quickly, "not that. He started to do it a few times, but I just stood there and looked at him, like my poor mother did that last time he struck her; and he just can't do it, you see. But now you won't want me to go agin him. Do you

think it's right to ask a girl to do that, when it's her own father?"

"Yes," said Amos boldly, "if he was sick and the doctor told you to give him some bitter medicine that'd make him well, you'd sure do it, no matter what your dad said. Well, you're goin' to save him this way, you know."

"Yes, yes," she breathed, putting a hand to her breast, as if the conflict of emotions almost overpowered her, "*she* did the same more'n once, broke his bottle to save him; and that was why he hit her."

"Was she sorry that she done it?" asked Amos, craftily.

"I know she said, when she came to again, after lyin' there a whole hour, with me a cryin' my eyes out, believin' her dead—she said she'd do it again whenever she had the chance, if he killed her for it. She believed she'd been sent to try and *save* dad—poor little mother, she never lived to see the day."

Amos was feeling somewhat remorseful about thus working upon her feelings; but he really believed he was doing the best thing for everybody.

"Then her duty has come down to you, Sallie," he went on to say. "If this crazy

scheme goes through, you can just bet your dad will end his days locked up in jail. Now, by playing a little trick on Gabe Hackett you can upset his plan and save your father. Anyhow, you know it's Gabe's idea, and he's just dragging your weak dad into it."

Amos winced a little when saying this but he felt that the end justified the means. Crawley had the word "rascal" written all over his face, and apparently it required very little persuading to "drag" him into any scheme that promised easy money.

Sallie seemed to ponder over what the boy had suggested.

"Yes, it's sure my duty to save him, even if I has to seem agin him. That was what my mother said to me. Amos Simmons, I guess you're right. I'd die if my dad was sent to jail. He ain't never been there yet, you know. What do you want me to do, boy?" and she shivered, as if her resolution was made.

"Wait and see," whispered Amos, "two of us ought to be able to beat a pair like that. They're only bunglers, anyway. I'm dependin' on you, girl, remember. When Teddy Overton comes, you'll be right glad you promised to help. You've heard of his dad,

the head of the big lumber company, ain't you? But laugh a little, Sallie, 'cause Gabe, he's watchin' us like a hawk, right now. It wouldn't be good for us if he thought we was hatchin' up a way to pull the wool over his eyes. Laugh, and make out as how I was sayin' something funny like."

Sallie understood, and played her part so well that Hackett, who had been growing suspicious at seeing them with their heads together as if in confidential conversation, seemed satisfied that all was well, for he went on with his argument.

And so the minutes crept on. An hour had passed since they heard those three shots. The boys must be on the trail, and presently Gabe and Crawley would be considering it high time they set their trap. And yet Amos had not been able to figure out just how he was going to prevent the capture from taking place.

CHAPTER XIV

DOLPH HEARS ABOUT THE HAUNTED CABIN

Teddy Overton busied himself for several minutes around the spot where they could easily see, a deer had been butchered.

Dolph watched his chum eagerly, now and then casting an uneasy glance toward the scene of the late tragedy; as though the mutilated remains of the deer might tell the story, if only gifted with the power of speech.

One thing was already evident. The tracks of the two lawless poachers told that their comrade must have run up against some sort of snag, in his quest for a bee tree; and the secret of his failure to return to camp was not hard to guess.

Teddy seemed to have finally made up his mind, for he approached his friend.

"Well, have you found out what happened?" asked Dolph, eagerly.

"Yes, he's a prisoner, all right," the other replied.

"Gabe and Crawley responsible, I take it?" questioned Dolph.

"No other. They shot this deer out of season. Amos happened to see them do it. Because they're afraid he'll inform the game warden of this district, or because of some other reason, they concluded to take our chum along with them"

"But what business have they making any respectable person a prisoner? Why, those men would rob a trapper's *cache* of his pelts—they'd steal the pennies from a dead man's eyes. They've got some sort of a game up their sleeve, I guess and you're on to it, Teddy; I can see it in your face."

"Yes, I think I can see through a millstone that's got a hole in it," replied the lumberman's son and heir, grimly. "It's a risky one too all right. I knew Hackett was getting down grade pretty fast but I never thought he'd be so desperate as to try and kidnap a fellow, to hold him for ransom. He must be pretty near the end of his rope."

Dolph laughed, as though amused.

"What, is that their little dodge?" he exclaimed. "Well, they sure have gone and barked up the wrong tree, that time. Why, Amos hasn't got a relative in the wide world that he knows about, you told me. It's your good dad that's going to send him to school,

and give him the chance to study for being a doctor later on. What silly notion possessed them to ever lug him off? That Hackett must be going into his dotage, I just guess."

"Hold on, Dolph, perhaps not, when you look into their nice little game a bit further. Amos hasn't any cash, himself, but he's got a friend who thinks a heap of him, and whose daddy might put up ransom money. That friend is myself, you know?"

"I see," muttered Dolph, a little uneasily, "not so dull a game after all."

"They may have even a better card up their sleeve," continued Teddy, "I notice that when they left here those men took no pains to cover up their tracks. Fact is, it looks to me as they might be just *inviting* us to follow. That would indicate just one thing—that Amos was carried off to hold him as a bait to trap somebody else—you and me. Once they had the lot of us, you see they could send Amos to make terms for our surrender."

"Whew! you give me a bad feeling, Teddy; but honest now, it does sound reasonable like. I wouldn't put it past that big Gabe Hackett. I remember now, how he kept looking at me, queerlike, out of the corner of his eye. But this is a desperate affair. Do

you think they'd dare try such a job? If caught it would mean a long jail sentence."

"That's so, but Hackett is getting more reckless about consequences, right along. Like enough he figures on skipping across to Canada once he gets hold of a good bunch of the long green. You can be sure, Dolph, this is a trap laid for us."

"Then we'd be silly to fall into the same, I take it," declared the other.

"We certainly won't, if we know it," declared Teddy. "We'll take up the trail, and see if we can get our chum out of their hands; but let us never forget that we're up against a pair of prime woodsmen, who know pretty much all the tricks of the trade. And while we follow the trail we must arrange it so they can't lay hands on both of us. You're the one they want most, I take it, Dolph. I rather think Gabe would hesitate a little to hold me, because he knows what my dad can be, once he's roused up. It's getting dark, and we'll have to use the lantern. So while I go ahead, to follow the trail, do you hang back, just so far, with your scatter gun ready to pepper the rascals, if they show up."

"All right," said Dolph, seriously, "I want to say right now that I think your little plan's

a good one. The sooner we start the better. Amos, poor fellow, will be thinking we mean to desert him. Lead on, Teddy, and tell me just how far you want me to fall back."

Now, in all probability Dolph had never fired a shot at a human being in all his young life. The idea was more or less abhorrent to him; it did not appeal to him at all. But he came of soldier stock. Some of his people had borne an illustrious part in all the wars of the country from the time of the Revolution down to the unpleasantness with Spain, in which his father had served as a colonel.

When the test really came, doubtless Dolph would not be found lacking in those essential qualities that had distinguished his forebears.

As soon as Teddy called out the one word "come," he started after him, and managed from that moment to keep just so far in the rear that his presence could not be easily discovered by any observer.

In this way, then, was the pursuit taken up.

Teddy had little trouble about sticking to the plain trail. He could have covered the ground twice as fast, had he not been keeping an eye constantly ahead, fearing some sort of ambush.

So the better part of an hour passed. By this time an idea had come to the one who was doing the trailing. It happened that the old, long abandoned cabin once used by fur gatherers, was known to Teddy Overton. And now he began to feel confident that the trail was leading toward that spot.

Accordingly he signaled to Dolph to approach.

"I feel dead sure I know where they're heading for," he said as the other drew up. "And it might save considerable time if we struck out straight for the old cabin instead of following their trail. And besides," he added, "perhaps we'll escape a trap by springing this surprise on Gabe and Crawley."

"Old cabin, you say?" repeated Dolph, "whoever lived there, Teddy?"

"Some trappers, many years ago. There's a dark story told about a tragedy that happened there. One trapper went crazy, they said, from too much strong drink. He killed his companions, and froze to death himself. They were found there in the Spring by some timber cruisers, looking for new lands up here. Nobody has ever lived there since. Now and then some wanderer has put in a night in the cabin, but they say it's haunted;

and that those trappers' spirits come back to fight over again their long ago battles. I was at the cabin once, in the day time, though. A lot of ugly bats flew out. We didn't see any spirits, either. But then, I don't think I'd care to stay a week in that ramshackle old hut."

"Well of all things, a haunted cabin take the cake," declared Dolph. "Now, I'd just like to play ghost, for once, and give those fellows a scare that'd make their hair stand up on end."

"Shall we make a bee line for the hut, as I said?" asked Teddy.

"Sure. You're the captain of this relief expedition. Whatever you say for me to do I'll try and carry out, you understand, Teddy."

"Good enough. And I'll warrant you never dreamed of such a business as this when you helped me map out our little canoe trip across the neck of Michigan to White Fish Bay and perhaps the Pictured Rocks, eh, Dolph?"

The other fairly snorted his disgust.

"Well, I should think not," he remarked; "and who would? Why, if I'd been over in Greece, or Spain, or Italy, I might have

guessed that something of the kind would have turned up; but away up in this Michigan wilderness—well, it faizes me, all right. But then, I reckon human nature's pretty much the same all over the world. The temptation to get hold of the mighty dollar makes men do heaps of queer stunts, I don't care whether they're white, red, black or yellow. Now, I guess you're intending to sneak around, and creep up to this same haunted cabin by the rear route?"

"Yes, that's the game," replied Teddy.

"That is, while these two poacher chaps are lying in a snug little ambush at some point along their own trail, why, we can be spying on the cabin on our own account?" Dolph went on to remark.

"You're on, I see," chuckled the other.

"It looks good to me," Dolph continued, reflectively. "As I said before, tell me what to do, and I'll carry it out to the letter."

"I hope we won't have to get to the fighting stage of the game," Teddy remarked, as they kept pushing forward in a direct line; "but if we do I know I can depend on you to back me up. There are other ways to win out. Well, here goes to douse the glim."

He blew the lantern out and hung it on the branch of a tree he marked.

"I can find it again given half a chance," he said; "and now we've got to do the rest of it in the dark."

Through the silent pine woods they crept like shadows, flitting from tree to tree.

Now and then Teddy would pause to listen, for caution had become second nature with the boy and he did not mean to lead his friend into trouble, if he knew it. But no sound came to their ears, at least nothing that would indicate the presence of human beings near.

Then through the trees they caught the gleam of a light, which, from its steady character they believed must come from the small window of a cabin.

CHAPTER XV

THE POWER OF MUSIC

Dolph could not but watch the actions of his camp mate with considerable curiosity and satisfaction, at this stage of the game.

Teddy had had more or less experience in woodcraft, and long ago learned many of the lessons so essential in the make-up of a clever still hunter. To him the leaves of the forest spoke as eloquently as printed pages in a book did to the other canoe cruiser. He could read the language of the trail, and discover a score of valuable things, from signs that would never be noticed by ordinary eyes or at least deemed of no importance.

When an observing lad has spent considerable time in these Northern woods, the voices of Nature speak to him in the wailing of the wind whispering secrets as it stirs the branches of the pines; he hears another story in the thunder tones of the rushing rapids; the crash of the summer storm; the whisper of sunrise; the chatter of the little woods folks excited over his presence in their favorite haunts—

he learns by degrees to match his wits against their cunning, and to discover every secret connected with their mode of living, so that the curtain of mystery is rolled away for his eyes, and he lives in a world totally unknown to many others of his kind.

Teddy had practiced this art of creeping silently through the woods, when stalking the timid deer, and perhaps also the lordly caribou over in Canada. He certainly had all the little wrinkles down pretty fine—at least Dolph thought so, as he followed in his wake, endeavoring the best way he could to imitate these noiseless movements.

So, foot by foot, and yard by yard, they drew nearer the strange cabin.

As yet not a sound had been heard, to indicate that the place had any inhabitant; though the light shining from the small opening that might be called a window, must be set down as conclusive evidence on that score, since lights ordinarily do not spring into existence without the aid of human hands.

Twice Teddy halted until his chum came alongside. Then he would whisper a few words in his ear, after which the forward movement would be resumed.

All at once both boys came to a sudden

pause, and crouched there, listening to certain sounds that had broken loose.

Plainly these sprang from a fiddle—a violin is unknown by any other name than this, in the backwoods country, where the "fiddler" is always in great demand at the husking bees and barn dances.

Undoubtedly some one was sawing a bow across the catgut strings of an instrument and it was evident from the chords resulting from this effort that the player was no greenhorn.

Teddy pinched the arm of his chum when the latter came alongside, and whispered, "Amos."

He had heard the woods boy scrape a bow more than a few times, and recognized his "touch" instantly. Indeed, Teddy had more than once regretted that he had decided against the other bringing his old fiddle along. With it in camp Amos would have been enabled to make many an evening around the fire seem more sociable.

Apparently then, Amos must have discovered some sort of old instrument in the cabin occupied by Crawley, the trapper and poacher. Overtaken by an irresistible inclination to make music, he had eagerly pounced upon the same, tuned up, and started in.

The music stopped several times, and a twanging followed. Amos evidently was having more or less trouble in making the old fiddle behave.

Somehow the sounds thrilled Teddy, and he found himself wondering what the result would be. Would the two scoundrels, possibly in hiding close by, rush upon the scene, and demand that the noise stop forthwith?

After all, why should they do this? It was an object with them to have the other two boys believe that Amos was being suitably entertained, so that with suspicions wholly disarmed they would walk innocently into the trap?

Ah! now the woods boy seemed to fancy that he had tuned the old violin as well as might be done; either that, or else he could no longer hold his desire to play under bonds.

With a sudden swing of the bow he started into "Money Musk," always a prime favorite among the loggers in the winter camps, who, in their times of leisure, danced for an hour, and usually to some of these good old tunes.

Amos was a "good one" with the bow. He could make that fiddle fairly laugh and weep by turns, as he coaxed the vibrating strings.

Dolph had heard many kinds of music in

different corners of the wide world, whither he had traveled with his father. He had sat and listened to the most famous artists of Europe, and eagerly drank in the sounds as only a true lover of melodious combinations can. He had felt his soul aroused by the grand crash of orchestras led by celebrated composers. He had sat through scores of operas, and applauded the famous song birds, with voices worth thousands of dollars a night to the fortunate possessors.

And yet this boy could not remember of ever having been so thrilled by the sound of music in all his life, as when crouching there in that thicket, just outside the "haunted" cabin, listening to the weird playing of his camp mate, Amos.

Say what you will, the surroundings have everything to do with the effect produced by music. A wild, barbaric crash of tom toms appeals more effectively to sentiment if heard among the queer lodges of a Zulu "Kraal" in South Africa, than the same strain could ever do under the towering roof of a London music hall.

So it was in this case. The danger that hovered over them, the state of Nature by which they were surrounded; and the fact

that this lonely cabin in the pine woods was said to be haunted by spirits of the dead trappers—all these things united to thrill the nerves of an excitable boy like Dolph Bradley, and give him the sensation of his life.

The fiddle seemed to moan and laugh and even sob, as the delighted Amos drew his magic bow over the strings, until the whole vicinity appeared to be filled with strange spirit voices.

Had any wandering basket-making Chippewa Indian, or nomad timber cruiser, his mind filled with an ardent belief in ghosts, chanced to pass within hearing distance of those ramshackle walls on this particular night, the chances were he would have fled in abject terror, upon hearing such strange sounds.

When Amos had reached the end of his tune, after repeating the refrain in a minor key, he immediately struck up "Dixie," and from this whipped off upon the well-known strains of the "Arkansaw Traveler."

That air has aroused wild enthusiasm in many a concert hall, but it certainly never thrilled human hearts more than on this occasion.

Dolph could hardly keep his feet still; while Teddy was drawing himself along in the direction of the little window, as though bent upon investigating, and seeing for himself if it could be Amos producing those wondrous strains.

When Teddy presently reached the wall of the old cabin, he raised his head until his wondering eyes took in the strange scene beyond. It was so that Dolph found his chum when he, too, reached the spot, to also stare.

Amos was in plain view, squatted on the floor. He held the end of the old instrument tucked under his chin, regulation fashion, with the most caressing air imaginable. For the time being Amos had apparently forgotten his surroundings, forgotten everything else in the world, perhaps, save that after a long lapse he was again happy in being able to coax those sobbing strings to give out the music he loved so well.

Indeed, just then his eyes were shut, as though he might be in a half trance; but Teddy knew this was a favorite habit with the young lumberjack, indicating that he was wrapped up in his playing, and in the seventh heaven of delight.

But this was not all.

Sitting on a low three-legged stool close by, and leaning forward, with her chin held in her hand, and her big blue eyes fastened upon the fiddler in wonder, was a girl of ten or twelve years of age. She seemed actually fascinated by those wonderful strains which now sprang from the instrument that was doubtless often sadly racked by her uncultured father, in his endeavor to play.

Now, Teddy knew full well about the old story of mermaids tempting luckless mariners to their doom. He also understood that many a trap has been baited with music or a pretty face in times gone by. But everything went to tell him that Amos was playing just because he had discovered an old fiddle, and not that his captors wanted him to do so.

Indeed this fact was immediately proven, for even as Teddy looked into the place he detected a movement in the direction of the door, which swung open, to admit the burly figure of the game poacher, Crawley.

Teddy's first thought was that the man had become enraged at this unwarranted outburst of sound from the boy prisoner, and that he had rushed to the spot to hoarsely

demand that the noise cease, on pain of punishment.

He even anticipated seeing Crawley foaming at the mouth knowing what a vile temper the greasy old wretch was said to possess. Fearing that Amos might be in danger of rough handling, Teddy gripped the gun he held, and instantly resolved to block that little game, if it were tried.

Never was he more mistaken.

Crawley, it is true, came into the cabin with the impetuosity of a hurricane, and his hard face was indeed working with some sort of emotion, but it was far from anger.

Indeed, the man seemed to be quivering with eagerness, and the hand he stretched out toward the boy on the floor was more indicative of pleading than wrath.

Crawley was at that moment fairly transformed. Deep down in his rough soul he must have had a natural love for music which, owing to his clumsiness and lack of education could never find an adequate outlet. Old sinner that he was, probably he had stood many a time and listened as if charmed, to some song bird in the brush; and even the cheery call of the bobolink, heard in the early Spring, may have had the power to make him

look up and listen, when in the act of taking a mink or a muskrat from his traps.

Teddy saw this, and greatly marveled. He realized that every day he lived it was possible for him to learn something new. Because a man might be rough and uncouth, and perhaps even lawless in his way of living, was no evidence that he might not have a streak of good deep down in his nature.

In Crawley it was perhaps this passion for music; but Teddy guessed it was so *very* deep down, that it was hardly likely to do himself, or any one else in the world, any good.

CHAPTER XVI

WHEN CRAWLEY LOST HIS HEAD

Teddy did not move, nor did Dolph. They could not have done so, even had they wanted, so enthralled did that strange scene hold them.

No one looked toward the window, fortunately, and consequently the presence there of the two peeping canoe boys was not discovered.

Of course, this sudden coming of Crawley upon the scene had created a diversion. The girl started up with a little cry of grief, as though bewailing the possible finish of her pleasure. Hearing all this, Amos, too, ceased to draw his bow across the strings, and as the music abruptly ceased, he opened his eyes.

"Go on, consarn ye!" exclaimed Crawley, in a voice that fairly trembled with eagerness, "keep right along wid yer fiddlin' I tell yer. Don't yer *dar'* ter stop jest thar—finish that piece like ye was a-doin'! By glory! ain't I been a-tryin' ter git the second part o' that Traveler tune this ten months, an' allers

swingin' right around inter the fust half agin. Go on, boy, play it all ther way through, I tells yer! I'm jest fairly wild ter hear how she goes. By gum— but ye *kin* make thet ole fiddle o' mine talk some. Ye jest fair seem ter burn the strings wid yer bow. I ain't never heerd sech music. Go on! Go on, boy, play!"

Crawley was so excited that he fairly shouted these words at Amos, who hardly understood what it all meant, but sat there with his bow upraised, staring.

Teddy came very near laughing out loud at the singular coincidence. He remembered hearing his father tell of an old Italian professor of music in Cincinnati, Tosso by name, who, whenever he played this favorite selection in public used to tell a humorous story in connection with it.

This was to the effect that once upon a time he was riding horseback through the backwoods of Arkansas, and asked for accommodations over night of the owner of a cabin, who was sitting on a bench sawing away at a fiddle. So while he kept on going over and over the same melody, in his rude way, he shook his head as if he did not like to be interrupted, and just took time to say he had no room or food to spare; after which he

harked back, and began the same old strain over and over.

Thereupon the music master had asked for the loan of the battered fiddle a few minutes, and he would show him how the Arkansaw Traveler should be played all the way through. The settler's delight was unbounded. He declared the traveler must stay over night, even if he and the old woman had to sleep in the loft; and he was welcome to all the food and whiskey they possessed; for he said that for ten years he had been constantly trying to catch onto that second half, which always eluded him.

So history sometimes repeats itself.

Amos finally seemed to comprehend what was wanted, and that he was not to be made a victim of violence. With a satisfied grin, he once more tucked the end of the old fiddle under his square chin, and began to draw the bow squeakingly across the taut strings, presently starting off upon the desired tune.

And when he jumped from the first to the second part it was simply amazing to watch the manner of the greasy old game poacher.

His face lighted up with ecstacy, his hand twitched, as if drawing the bow back and forth, the fingers of the other worked convulsively as if engaged in touching the strings,

while even his moccasined feet started to tread a measure—so great is the power of music over the human soul.

Teddy wondered what effect this new peculiar incident might have upon the relations existing between Amos and his captors.

Would Crawley allow his gratitude to the boy to interfere with the scheme which he and Big Gabe were endeavoring to put through?

Remembering that Gabe would have to be reckoned with in the matter, and that no love of music was apt to sway him from the course he had mapped out, Teddy felt very doubtful on this score.

Crawley would not let the boy stop playing when he reached the end of the tune.

"Play her some more, boy, play her frequent-like! I've been awaitin' ter git thet same chune complete so long now, seems like I never could hear it enuff. It's great, that's what, ain't it, Sallie, girl? Don't yer feel glad now to see yer ole dad lookin' so happy like? Play on, Amos, play right along! Don't ye *dar'* stop—it'd be nigh as much as yer life was wuth to disapp'int me now."

And Amos played, with a humorous look on his face, and perhaps a sly wink in the

direction of the girl, who had resumed her former rapt pose, with her chin buried deep in the cup of her hand.

Crawley could not have been drinking, at least to excess, so it was not liquor that influenced him; but as the music proceeded, his feet began to move in unison, and his arms took to swinging. Almost before Teddy realized it, the bulky form of the trapper was gyrating around the room; he was so wrought up that he could not keep still.

Crawley had a pretty hard name among the loggers, and those who sought the pelts of the various wild animals of the Northern pines. He was known as a quarrelsome man, and a fighter who had wrought more or less trouble wherever he roved—in the camps of timber cruisers, among the lumberjacks, and with other trappers; but he certainly did not look like a dangerous citizen at that particular moment, while circling around the shanty, snapping his fingers, trying to keep on whistling the recovered air, so as to impress it on his memory, and otherwise conducting himself after the manner of a happy, carefree squatter, regardless of the morrow.

While Teddy was trying to make up his mind as to what the eventual outcome of this

strange situation might be, he saw another form appear in the doorway.

Big Gabe Hackett!

The timber cruiser strode into the cabin, his red face filled with both astonishment and anger.

Plainly the weird strains of the "Arkansaw Traveler" did not appeal to any emotion in *his* soul. Music might have charms to soothe the savage, but it failed to awaken any responsive chord in the breast of this giant of the pine woods.

Crawley had now seized upon his child, and was holding her to him while making ungainly attempts to keep time with the rhythm of the music. Sallie actually smiled for the first time since Amos had entered the place; and it was a smile that lighted up her elfin features until in the boy's mind they looked almost angelic.

Imagine the disgust of the scheming Big Gabe to come rushing into the cabin and discover such a remarkable thing as this going on.

His heavy voice sounded above the music, and the beat of Crawley's feet on the floor.

"Stop it! Say, Crawley, hev ye gone clean crazy? What sorter kerryin' on d'ye call this here, anyhow? Quit it, I say and act

sensible. Hoy dye 'spect we're a goin' ter work out our game if ye play the big baby. Stop fiddlin,' boy!"

Amos, of course, obeyed, and with the inspiration of the music gone, the traveler also ceased capering around the room.

He did look a little shame-faced as he turned upon his confederate; but at the same time there was a triumphant glow in his eyes as he burst out with:

"Why, hang it, Gabe, the boy kin play Arkansaw *all the way through*—what d'ye know about thet? Here I been jest wild ter ketch the hang o' thet second half fer a coon's age. P'raps yer don't jest understand what thet means ter me, Gabe. Blame yer games—what do I keer, so long's I lerns thet chune. Why, I'd risk my bones ter git hold of it."

"Wall, if ye keep on a goin' like I seen ye jest now, chances be ye'll resk more'n yer bones; fer I'll be tempted ter fill yer full o' holes. What d'ye think I'll stand fer, Crawley? I ain't playin' this game fer the fun of it. Money talks, and purty loud too, sometimes. Now's one o' 'em. S'pose ye let all this monkey-shine business drop fer the present, an' play the game fer what it's worth. Put that fiddle down, boy, drat ye, and don't

tech it agin, 'less ye want ter feel the heft o' my hard fist. Crawley, come with me, back ter whar we was lyin' in ambush."

Big Gabe spoke in a determined way, and evidently possessed considerable power over his weaker-willed companion. For Crawley, although scowling, took a step forward, as if to obey.

It was then that little Sallie caught hold of the hand of her rough father, and sought to detain him. She understood what these men had in view, and taking advantage of the temporary softening of her parent, due to the power of the music on his soul, he hoped she might persuade him into refusing to take part in the attempted abduction of the millionaire's son.

"Stay here with me, daddy, won't you?" she pleaded. "He knows ever so many more tunes, and he'll play 'em all, if ye wanter hear 'em, won't you, Amos? Don't go out again, please don't? Let Big Gabe alone; he'll only get you into trouble. Stay here with your little Sallie, won't you, daddy?"

The man seemed to hesitate. He looked doubtfully in the face of the child, whereupon Hackett broke out in harsh language. He also made a suggestive motion with the

Marlin repeating shot gun, which he had taken possession of; and whatever the spasm of better feeling that had dominated Crawley lately, if was speedily vanquished by his love of gain.

He suddenly muttered some words, and flung the detaining hand of his child from him. The conflict between the elements making up his nature had not lasted long.

So Crawley, with a scowl toward Amos, as though blaming the boy for bringing about all this trouble, strode out of the door after his companion, and the two in the cabin were left alone again.

Teddy had pulled his companion down alongside him before this happened; indeed, when Hackett first appeared upon the scene; for he feared lest the restless eyes of the big timber cruiser, like unto those of the red fox which he had often been compared with for craftiness, might in roving around, discover the two who were peeping in at the small window, and trouble of a serious nature ensue.

While Teddy did not actually fear the rascal, still, he believed it wise to remain hidden from those they meant to hoodwink, as long as possible, at least.

Indeed, it was still a question in Teddy's mind whether or not Big Gabe had discovered their presence. He was as cunning as the fox itself, and might have refrained from betraying any evidence of his discovery, but once beyond range of the boy's vision, was apt to start some shrewd flank movement calculated to encompass their capture.

Under these conditions Teddy considered it the part of wisdom to crouch down in the shadows and wait for some little time, until they could be positive the men had returned to their ambush.

They could hear Amos and Sallie talking, as though they had become great friends in the short time they had known each other; though Teddy guessed that the magic fiddle had drawn them both together, more than anything else.

He had swept his eyes around the interior of the cabin when first peering in through the little window, and beyond a few rusty traps, some furs used for sleeping purposes, a few moth-eaten blankets and several cooking utensils, it did not seem to contain much else. yet things were as clean as Sallie could make them, and even a broom fashioned from twigs showed that the child swept the old floor regularly.

CHAPTER XVII

THE HOLE IN THE FLOOR

When Teddy had waited a certain length of time, he whispered some words to his companion, and immediately departed.

Undoubtedly his intention was to scout around a bit, in order to make sure that the coast was clear before they proceeded to attempt getting Amos to leave the cabin.

Undoubtedly the two men had secured the door on the outside when they departed, so that the boy could not leave the place. The window was merely a slit in the log walls, and too small to admit the passage of one the size of Amos, so that it would seem as though they felt reasonably secure about leaving him.

Dolph waited patiently.

The minutes glided past, and all he could hear was the murmur of voices just beyond the slit in the wall; which, being continuous, seemed as though Amos and the girl might be having a heart to heart conversation discussing their various troubles.

Finally Dolph could not stand it any longer.

With Amos so close by, it seemed to him the height of foolishness to delay longer, when the two plotters might give up their watching and waiting in disgust at any minute, and return to the cabin.

So Dolph once more raised his head until he could just manage to peep over the lower edge of the narrow opening, and look into the room.

It was a candle that was burning, a home-made affair, possibly fashioned out of bear's fat or tallow by the trapper; and of course, the fire having died down meanwhile, it did not illuminate the whole floor of the cabin any too well.

Nevertheless Dolph was able to see into every corner, and could have easily told had there been others present besides the two who still sat there on the floor, Amos idly allowing his fingers to run over the strings of the old fiddle.

The boy was talking earnestly. From the manner in which he gazed into the face of Sallie, it was evident he was endeavoring to convince her that it was her duty to give up this nomadic life, traveling here and there with her good for nothing father, and let the boys take her to her grandmother's house at

the Sault Ste. Marie, known far and wide simply as the "Soo."

She seemed to listen eagerly to what he said, and upon her thin little face there crept a very wistful look. But whenever he stopped talking she would shake her head sorrowfully, though with a determination that would have well become a little heroine.

Dolph caught some of the words she spoke. He could draw his own conclusion from them, to the effect that Sallie had given her word to her dying mother to stand by her father, no matter what befell until he either reformed his ways or met the fate that continually hovers over the heads of such evil men.

Somehow Dolph was thrilled with admiration for the pluck of this frail girl, who could resist all temptations, for which her heart must be longing, and endure this wretched existence, simply because she had promised the mother, who was gone; and the man she would try to shield and save was her "dad" though most unworthy to bear that name.

To others Crawley might appear only a drunken scoundrel, whose word was not worth considering as an asset; but perhaps Sallie could look back with gratitude to a few isolated instances when he had been "good to her."

Dolph watched the two for a few minutes, and then, thinking that it might be only right to let Amos know his chums were around, was just in the act of making some sort of signal the other would surely recognize, when something occurred that caused him to change his mind.

The girl seemed to be pointing to the floor over in a corner. There was an expression of alarm upon her face. Amos was bending forward too, as if he too had caught the same thing that had attracted Sallie's attention so suddenly. Indeed, he looked astonished beyond measure, and from his attitude one might believe Amos was not far from the border of actual fright.

Naturally Dolph was keenly interested.

Whatever it could be that was having this strange effect upon these two, he felt that he ought to share in the knowledge, and accordingly Dolph immediately turned his eyes in the same direction.

Dolph was conscious of a peculiar prickly sensation all over his scalp, as though his hair might be feeling an inclination to stand on end. When he came to reflect upon the circumstance later, he did not wonder at having experienced this feeling, since the cabin bore

such a bad name, and was said to be haunted by uneasy ghosts.

A section of the floor itself was slowly rising upward, as if propelled by invisible hands. From its shape Dolph could readily guess that it was really some sort of trap that had at some time or other been cut in the heavy boards.

If there were such things as ghosts, surely this must be some of their work; but while Dolph was amazed beyond measure, and awaited the outcome with eagerness, he was not yet ready to commit himself upon this score, until he had seen the spirit with his own eyes.

Higher rose the square, while little Sallie held her breath, and shrank closer to Amos, who, unconsciously perhaps, put out an arm as though to protect her.

Then the section of flooring having attained a perpendicular position began to lower; the trap was being dropped back towards the boards.

Dolph gave a chuckle of delight when he saw the smiling face of Teddy exposed.

The lumberman's son may have known of the trap before, since he had visited this same cabin; or else he had prowled around just

now to advantage, discovering how to crawl under the old shack, and reach this opening.

He was holding up his finger at the surprised pair, as if to warn them that silence was the best policy just then.

Dolph fully expected to see his chum climb out of the hole, and greet the prisoner; and he was about to chime in with hearty words on his own account, when suddenly the boy bobbed back into the cavity under the cabin; pulling the trap shut after him.

At the same time Dolph himself heard the rumble of voices in the open, and understood that for some reason or other, the two men were returning to the cabin.

Instantly, he realized that his position at the window was a precarious one, for as his head would be outlined against the light within, they must inevitably be attracted by any movement on his part, if close enough at the time.

Of course though, Dolph had to drop flat, and crouching there he gripped his gun, almost holding his very breath with suspense.

At least they did not come his way, which fact he considered pretty good evidence that he had not been seen; instead, they unfastened the door, and entered the cabin.

Dolph wondered very much what had brought them back so soon, to disturb the nice plans Teddy must have arranged. He listened, to discover whether he could catch something of what was said, and which might explain matters.

Their voices being heavy, came distinctly to his ears. Dolph even ventured to take another sly look. This revealed the fact that while Crawley was rudely binding up the arm of his companion, Amos had taken the job out of his hands, and was doing it as cleverly as any surgeon might, considering the poor material at hand.

From their talk it seemed that Big Gabe had caught his foot in a root he failed to see in the darkness. In falling clumsily he had managed to drop his hunting knife, and it pierced his arm, giving him a painful wound that bled freely.

Sometimes the fate of a nation hinges on a trifle. The listening lad at the window wondered what effect this might have upon their destinies.

At any rate, it seemed to put a different aspect upon the conditions existing, for nothing could apparently be done looking to the release of Amos while the men were hugging close to the cabin.

And there was poor Teddy, snuggling down in that hole under the floor, possibly afraid to even move an inch, lest he draw attention to himself, and bring about discovery.

Dolph hoped the two men might conclude to go on guard again when the operation of binding up Hackett's wounded arm had been completed.

From words that floated to his ears he realized that Crawley declined to make any attempt at capture alone; and the big timber cruiser seemed to have lost some his vim with the flow of blood. He could not work with one arm; and altogether Big Gabe now seemed satisfied to stay indoors.

He also made mention of the fact that perhaps their object could be attained just as well be remaining there, and letting their prospective victims come to them, a new view of the case in which Crawley was willing to concur.

It was certainly most aggravating to say the least, and must be doubly so to Teddy, flattened out in an uncomfortable position under the floor.

Dolph was pitying his chum all the while, never dreaming that Teddy might himself be feeling very comfortable, and even planning mischief.

If they had to remain indoors, at least Crawley was determined that he must have Amos go on with his fiddling, so he ordered the boy to start along, and tune up again.

Big Gabe scowled at hearing this, but then Amos had done so well in binding up his arm, and stopping the flow of blood, that he was disposed to let it go at that.

So once again the sound of the bow scraping across the strings was heard in the old haunted cabin. Amos, given full swing, let himself out in earnest, playing one air after another until he had really exhausted his list of tunes; when Crawley sitting on the bench, his rough face wreathed in smiles, ordered him to start all over again.

What would be the end of this strange adventure?

Dolph wondered if Amos would be kept at the playing business until he fell over, utterly exhausted.

And what of poor Teddy, who must be terribly cramped below the floor? What, if unable to remain there any longer he suddenly threw up the trap, and appeared before the two men as the original "ghost" of the old cabin?

Dolph wondered what would be the proper

caper for him under such conditions. He could see no other thing possible than that he should thrust his head and gun through the narrow window, and threaten the men into submission.

Really this seemed good to Dolph; and grimly determined to act, he drew back the hammer of his gun, resolved to appear as resolute as possible, in order to strike consternation to the hearts oi the two rascals, and make then throw up their hands.

But Dolph did not take into the consideration the fact that some one else might have plans to work out, differing materially from those he was figuring on.

This party in fact was Teddy, whom last Dolph had seen hastily withdrawing beneath the shelter of the floor.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CABIN ABANDONED TO THE GHOSTS

Amos had just stopped, in order to draw out his red bandana handkerchief, and wipe the drops from his forehead, because it was pretty warm work, fiddling away for half an hour "like a house afire," as he expressed it.

Just then a distinct and most dreadful groan was heard.

Crawley jumped to his feet with an oath; and even Gabe raised his head to listen, for to ease the strain on his arm he had been lying down on a blanket.

Upon both their faces astonishment, incredulity, and even a wild, ungovernable *fear* could be detected, as they stared at each other, and then all around.

Another groan, even more terrible than before, seemed to well up out of space, nor could the listening Dolph locate its source, even though positive Teddy must be responsible for the sounds, which were intended to alarm the two rascals.

"Boy, air thet you a-makin' thet n'ise?"

demanded Crawley, seizing hold of Amos' sleeve; but it did not need the emphatic denial of the lad to convince him, for another of the chilling sounds came, setting his cowardly heart to beating madly.

"It's a trick!" yelled Big Gabe, turning white in spite of his words, "Crawley, climb up into the loft, an' see if they ain't a critter a-hidin' thar! Ef ye find him, throw the measly skunk down fur me ter tromp on."

Crawley evidently did not like the job, for he was slow to follow out the plan suggested by his companion; but by dint of much jeering, and a little flattery, he was finally induced to climb up the partly broken ladder that led to a sort of loft, extending half-way over the room.

In the past those who lived in the pine woods cabin probably stored their pelts up there until the spring came, and it was time to get them properly stretched and dried as they had been before packing away, to market.

He carried with him another candle that with shaking hands he had managed to light from the first one. Upon gaining a position where he could peer over the edge of the flooring of the loft, Crawley was heard to give vent to a sigh of relief.

"Ain't nawthin' doin' up here, Gabe; the place is empty as all git-out," he remarked, and as if deeming his duty done Crawley came down much faster than he had ascended.

His arrival below seemed to be the signal for another outburst of groans, this time more than ever of a nature to chill the blood of any one given to superstition.

Crawley had a failing that way, though how he ever came to take lodgings in this said-to-be haunted cabin under such circumstances would always be a mystery.

Big Gabe had himself never taken much stock in such things as ghosts. But then that may have been simply because up to now he had never happened to run across anything bordering on the supernatural.

He looked very much shaken, and seemed disposed to lay the blame on the shoulders of poor Amos.

"See wot yer pesky scrouchin' hes gone an' done," he shouted, angrily. "Even the ghostes hes ris' up an' howled agin sech n'ises. I knowed sumthin'd happen, as sure as thunder, when ye let loose all them caterwaulin' sounds. Now we gotter vamose outer here right speedy, an' make a camp in the open. Crawley, it's all yer fault, en-

couragin' sech crazy doings. Now! hear thet! would ye? Hole on thar Mister Ghost, we're a-goin' peaceable like, if ye gives us harf a chanct," as a terriffic shriek rang through the cabin accompanied by a pounding that seemed to make the floor tremble.

Dolph could not keep out of the game; the temptation to join in was too much for him. And so he began to kick upon the wall wherever a board had been used to cover up some broad chink, where the dried mud between the logs had fallen away.

Taken in all, it was quite a tremendous racket; and even Amos began to look uneasy, as though he found himself entertaining a suspicion that after all there might be some grain of truth connected with that story of the spirits of the trappers who had met a tragic fate, returning to fight their battles over; while Sallie's face was the picture of dismay.

Crawley was already making for the door; with the evident intention of fleeing from the wrath to come; nor did he stop give his devoted child one thought in this time of alarm. Big Gabe did not mean to be left in the lurch either, evidently. He had an excuse that with only one good arm he was hardly in condition to wrestle with anything or anyone, either human or of a ghostly order.

The retreat became a scramble, with the whole four at the door at the same time, trying to escape from the haunted interior. The groans had ceased but that might only be a ruse to deceive them.

Amos clutched the precious fiddle, and the girl only stopped once, to possess herself of some article of apparel, for which she possibly entertained fondness on account of certain memories associated between it and her dead mother.

So they streamed out of the cabin in a bunch.

Dolph knew enough to hide, and keep very still. Teddy's little game had worked very well, only it chanced that in fleeing from the haunted cabin, the two game poachers had gone and carried Amos with them.

So far as the rescue of their camp mate went, Teddy and Dolph were no nearer the goal of their ambition than before.

True, the cabin had been abandoned, temporarily at least, to the spirits, but it was an empty victory after all, since the work must be done over again.

There was always a chance that in the open Amos might slip away. But even at that Teddy would refuse to be pacified; because

the rascals held possession of his highly prized Marlin gun, and he did not mean to abandon that indispensable weapon without a fight for it.

Dolph knew that Teddy would join him as soon as he could crawl out from the confined space under the floor. Accordingly, he contented himself with trying to note the direction taken by the fugitives.

There did not seem to be much trouble about doing this, for they certainly made a tremendous racket; indeed he was partly convinced that Amos played the part of martyr, clumsily falling over about every log he could find on the way, with sundry cries of pain or disgust, calculated to reach the ears of his chums.

Sure enough, in a couple of minutes Teddy came out of the cabin, breathing hard.

"They've gone, of course," he observed, between his pants for breath. "Scared 'em off, did I? Too bad they took Amos along, ain't it? But we're bound to get after the thievy cowards, hot-footed. It'll sure be queer if we can't make 'em give our chum up. Notice which way they went, Dolph?"

"Yes," said Dolph, "Amos took pains to make all the noise he could. Listen. I think

you can hear him floundering around yet. Come, let's be on the jump. The way things are going, we must win out soon. But I was sorry to see how you scared that girl. Think of that beast Crawley being her father, poor child."

"Yes, I know Sallie," the other replied, in a low voice, as they started away. "She's a wise little thing, older than her years because she's had the troubles of a grown-up. I reckon they won't go far away, but halt, and build a big camp fire to scare ghosts off!"

"Well," remarked Dolph, "I must say these two rascals are giving us a run for our money, all right. Once we get Amos and the gun, and we want nothing more from them. But I'd like to take that child out of this horrible life. Say, do you really know whether she's got any uncles or aunts or cousins?"

"A grandmother at the Soo, I was told, but you'd waste your time trying to induce her to leave that Crawley. I tried it once, but she told me she just *had* to stick to him—that the last chance he'd ever have lay in her, and she'd promised her mother never to give him up. I'm afraid from her delicate looks, she'll

die from exposure one of these days, following him around. He thinks she can stand whatever he can, the big brute. I'd like to help him to a coat of tar and feathers, or give him a cow-hiding, that's what," and Teddy's indignation actually made his voice tremble.

While they moved along, as silently as possible, occasionally they would hear one of the men call out to the other; for their gruff voices carried far on the still night air.

Perhaps Amos might himself have slipped away during this rapid retreat. The chances were, however, that his stubborn nature would not allow him to think of escape unless he could also carry off the gun that had been entrusted to his charge.

Big Gabe was holding greedily to the weapon; if he could not get anything else out of the game, at least he was sure of this; and ever since his eyes had first fallen upon that gun, in Teddy's hands, his fingers had fairly itched for it.

At one time the adventure had threatened to develop into a tragedy, but somehow, with the advent of that old fiddle on the stage, it had changed to a comedy, bordering almost on a farce.

The two pursuers presently decided that those they were following must have come to a halt, for the sound of voices grew more perceptible and then a light sprang up just ahead.

This, of course, came from a fire that had been hastily kindled for several reasons, chief of which might be set down the sudden dislike both men just now entertained with regard to being left in the dark.

Doubtless all thoughts of their plan against the liberty of the Cincinnati millionaire-manufacturer's son and heir was now abandoned, temporarily, at least. Crawley was drinking from time to time, to imbibe artificial courage; Big Gabe uttering ugly words, because in his mad rush to escape he had struck his wounded arm against the door frame, with much consequent pain.

Teddy now led his companion closer to the camp, where the two men had started a fire. He warned Dolph to be very careful, since Big Gabe was in a surly temper, and would possibly shoot "at the drop of the hat," leaving all inquiries until afterwards.

It was found that the fire burned on the bank of a small creek that ran into the lake, presumably.

This creek flowed through a sunken bed, some six feet or so below the surrounding surface; and to Teddy's experienced eye, the depression presented the best possible opportunity for approaching unseen the spot where the camp fire burned.

By stooping low, and creeping along under the bank, they would be able to actually invade the boundaries of the space illumined by the glow of the fire—Crawley having hastily gathered together a mass of dried wood, and fired the same, at the request of his wounded companion who refused to let the captured gun out of his possession for a single minute.

CHAPTER XIX

TEDDY'S WOODCRAFT HELPS

Impulsive Dolph was for making the venture without delay.

Fortunately Teddy had long since learned the value of caution and how to apply the same in the ordinary affairs of life.

He saw that Big Gabe, for instance, was in a particularly irritable frame of mind, suspicious and exacting. To cross his will while he held that many-shot Marlin in his hands would mean serious trouble all around.

If they could hold in until this cross-grained giant was asleep and snoring, their chances for success would be much improved.

That was the burden of the advice Teddy whispered in the ear of his friend; and Dolph, while impulsive, being also amenable to reason, agreed with him that it was best. Accordingly, they lay down upon the ground to rest; for taken in all it had been a pretty strenuous day and night to both of them, and they were beginning to realize that they were feeling tired.

Dolph, as he lay there, ran over in his mind the succession of stirring events that had been passing before his eyes of late.

Doubtless he would never forget the strange scene that demonstrated the power of music; nor yet that which followed, and had to do with the influence of fear and ignorant superstition, acting on the hearts and minds of rough men.

So Dolph lay there, and pondered in the half-dreamy way a boy may do when he is very tired; until before he realized it he was asleep.

A hand shaking him aroused Dolph. Before he could utter a sound the voice of his chum whispered in his ear.

"Sh! Don't make any noise. You've been asleep more than an hour, and it's time we were moving. Sit up, and take notice!"

Dolph did so.

It all came rushing back to him in a flash, and without waste of time he turned his eyes in the direction of the camp upon the creek bank.

The fire had been allowed to burn low, but was still in evidence. With his first glance Dolph could see several figures lying around, which would seem to indicate that Big Gabe

and the rest, overcome by weariness, even as he, Dolph, had been, had thrown themselves on the ground, and, to all appearances at least, were sound asleep.

It looked as though the time might be favorable for the successful carrying out of the plan of the young scouts.

Teddy had not been asleep one single minute.

On the contrary, while his friend lay there reviving his flagging energies, Teddy had remained constantly on guard, and figuring out just how they should presently proceed, in order to effect the rescue of Amos, and the recovery of that gun.

He first of all whispered in Dolph's ear the ideas that had been hatched during this period of fruitful guardianship. The other realized that every point seemed to have been covered most beautifully, so that if such a thing as failure did come, it must be laid to some other cause than lack of preparation.

Luck often enters such a game—just at the most critical moment one of the men might suddenly sit up, as campers sometimes will, disturbed by a bad dream or a belief that the fire needs looking after; and thus discovery be brought about.

All these things had to be taken into consideration; and while provision might not be made against them, some way of meeting the emergency could be arranged.

Teddy left no possible loophole uncovered, in making his arrangements; and by the time he had finished telling the other the many details, Dolph realized just how busy his chum's mind must have been at the time he himself slept.

So Teddy led the way, crawling down into the depression made through erosion, as the creek wound its way toward the lake.

Between the bank and the water, as a rule, there was plenty of surface to allow of a safe passage, though occasionally the boys might find it necessary to wet their feet; but such a trifle as this did not worry either of them; they were too much in earnest.

Again was Dolph forced to admire the clever tactics of his guide and mentor, as he moved noiselessly along, passing over yard after yard of territory without giving the slightest indication of his presence. Surely one could learn much by contact with so smart a woodsman, and that was really one of the Cincinnati boy's best qualities—his willingness to be shown.

Occasionally Teddy would stop and hold out his hand to restrain the one who was tagging along at his heels. Dolph was reminded of the familiar gesture used by city drivers and chauffeurs, when about to turn aside.

At such times Teddy would raise himself up, and peeping over the edge of the creek bank, take a cautious observation, that covered the adjacent camp and territory.

Apparently on each of these several occasions he found things satisfactory, since their forward progress would be immediately resumed after every halt. It seemed to Dolph that presently they would have reached a stage in the game where perhaps a different system of tactics must be employed.

Between the fire itself and the edge of the bank of the creek extended a space about thirty feet in width. While creeping across this, Teddy, on his way to cut Amos free—for before now the boys had learned that their chum was tied hand and foot—would have the sparse shelter of only a few small scattered bushes.

Teddy did not mean that his chum should make this last gap of the venture; but it had been arranged that Dolph crouch just under the rim of the bank, his eyes fastened

upon the two men; and in case one of them aroused at a critical time, it was to be his duty to pop up like a "jack in the box," cover them with his gun, and threaten to shoot unless they remained submissive.

Dolph had really keyed himself up to the point where he was ready to proceed to extreme measures, if pushed; he entertained a pretty poor opinion of both these scheming rascals, and believed they would be getting only their just desserts if necessity compelled him to "pepper" them with the contents of his scatter gun, at thirty yards distance.

But then, that was going pretty far ahead, and Dolph was ardently hoping for a bloodless victory, with both Amos rescued, and the Marlin gun recovered.

When Teddy had taken one of his observations for the third time, he seemed ready to call a halt. It was evident that they must have arrived at the point nearest the camp fire of the fugitives—that seemed rather a queer name to apply to these hardy rovers of the pine woods; but since they had really fled in alarm from the "supposed-to-be haunted" cabin, it might be very appropriate after all.

Without saying a word, and only through

touch, Teddy indicated just where the other was to stand. At this point a convenient little "dip" allowed of a sweeping survey of the camp, and Dolph would be in prime condition to carry out that threatening part of the game, if it became essential, which he sincerely hoped might not be the case.

He could thrust his gun over the top of the creek bank, and cover the sleepers; at the same time have his foot upon a friendly knob of stone that projected from the soil, allowing a sudden upheaval, should he feel it necessary to show himself.

All these arrangements were speedily settled; indeed, they did not take more than a minute or so of time.

Then Teddy was ready to pull himself up over the edge, get down flat on the ground and wriggle along one way or another, like a creeping cat perhaps, in the direction of the spot where they could plainly see the stocky form of their chum, Amos, stretched out.

Dolph, having settled himself in his appointed position, made ready to watch the advance of his friend.

He could feel his heart beating almost with the rapidity of a trip hammer; and even feared that its wild pulsation might awaken

the sleepers; but on second thought Dolph realized the absurdity of such an event, and from that time on became much more calm. His hands indeed, were perfectly steady, as they pushed the gun up, and rested it on the soil, in the desired position for immediate use.

Teddy was tightening his belt, and making sure that everything about him was in apple pie condition for the little venture. After he had once salied forth, there would be no time to give any thought to these matters.

Then he squeezed Dolph's hand once more, perhaps forgetting that he had already performed this operation two other times already. But then it was a time of such tremendous importance, that after all Teddy could be excused. Perhaps he was excited but if so, he managed to hide the fact pretty well. Why, Dolph thought the other as cool as any icicle that ever hung down from the woodshed gutter after a thaw in February. Doubtless he compared Teddy's manner with his own when deciding this fact. And that tumultuous heart made him only too conscious of his own shortcomings.

Then Teddy climbed silently out of the sunken creek channel, and started, low down on his chest, in the direction of the fire.

He had not made more than two hunches than Dolph noticed something. Why, Teddy had abruptly stopped. More than that, he was flattening himself out upon the ground as if the one object of his life just at that particular moment was to make himself seem as small as possible.

Now Dolph knew what this must signify. He hastily turned his troubled gaze in the direction of the smouldering camp fire and the sleepers, for only in that quarter could there possibly be any chance of interruption.

Had one of the men chosen to get up and stretch himself at this most inopportune moment? If so, then Teddy's mission must of necessity be postponed.

What Dolph saw almost took his breath away, it was so entirely different from anything he had expected; and immediately his feeling of alarm and dismay gave way to one bordering on expectancy.

Someone was slowly and cautiously getting up near the half-dead fire; but it was neither of the rough men. On the contrary, he could see the slight figure of the girl, Sallie; and from the manner in which she peered at the recumbent figures of her father and Big Gabe, it was evident that she did not wish either of them to know of her action.

There was evidently about to be put upon the boards, a feature of the game that neither of the boys had counted upon entering. No wonder then Dolph held his breath, while Teddy raised his head much as a tortoise might protrude his from its shell, as their eyes remained glued upon the camp of the game poachers.

CHAPTER XX

WHAT SALLIE DID

Sallie seemed a long time in getting up on her knees. All the while, too, she was keeping that watch upon the two men, as though the poor little heart might be throbbing like mad for fear lest one of them suddenly raise his head, and demand to know in gruff tones, why she was leaving her blanket at that hour.

There could be only one explanation of her suspicious actions, Dolph concluded; this was, that she had deliberately resolved to brave the wrath of Big Gabe as well as her own ruffianly father, and help Amos escape.

Dolph fairly held his breath with suspense when he grasped all that she seemed bent upon accomplishing. At the same time he was saying to himself in a whisper over and over again:

"Good for you, Sallie! Bulliest little girl I ever saw; don't this beat all, though!"

Sallie was now creeping away from her blanket. She certainly headed straight for the spot where Amos was lying.

Turning his eyes in that direction Dolph saw the prisoner raise his head. He seemed to be intently watching the silent advance of the girl, as though, bound as he was, Amos understood what Sallie meant to do.

Something glittered in the hand of the child, as a tongue of flame licked up a small bit of fuel that had dropped into the fire when a log partly turned over. Dolph quickly guessed that it must be a knife, though just where Sallie could have obtained the same he could not imagine.

Here was a situation, dramatic enough to please the most critical.

No wonder, then, that the two boys hardly dared to breathe properly as they watched the slow advance of the child of the lawless former mink trapper, and now game poacher. No wonder Dolph, yes, and Teddy too, blessed her mentally over and over, as she thus took her courage in both hands and dared the wrath of the two rough men. She evidently fully determined to assist the lad who had found the way to her poor little heart through the fairy touch of his bow on the strings of the old fiddle.

Perhaps she fancied that one of the sleepers moved, for suddenly Sallie sank down flat

upon the ground as though stricken with death, and lay there while several full minutes passed.

Amos bobbed his head up again and again, as though he could not understand just why the little girl had halted in her rescue work. He seemed to have been expecting her coming, from which Dolph guessed that Amos must have earlier in the night received some hint as to what he might expect.

The alarm, however, proved to be without foundation, it seemed; for presently Sallie was once more on the move, approaching now the sprawling form of Big Gabe, who chanced to have cast himself down near the prisoner, though perhaps after all it had been design on his part that caused the timber cruiser to do this.

These sort of wood voyagers are accustomed to waking by instinct when the fire burns low, and a chill pervades the air of the camp; the soft footfall of a cat might arouse them.

And Sallie knew it.

Dolph rememberd what his instructions had been. He was to make use of his gun as a gentle persuader in case of trouble while Teddy was creeping forward. Now that the task of setting Amos free had been trans-

ferred to the shoulders of another there was just as much reason for vigilance.

Accordingly, Dolph brought his gun to bear upon the burly figure of Big Gabe. If that worthy had reared up at that particular moment, the chances were the timber cruiser would have found himself precipitated into a peck of trouble.

But now Sallie had managed to creep past the man who snored, as he lay flat on his broad back. She was very close to Amos, who appeared to be more or less nervous. Dolph could guess why. He understood that it galled the woods boy to be compelled to lie there, incapable of helping himself, and just wait to be set free by a small, weak girl.

Amos was proud and would feel the humiliation of this for any a day. But of course he was too sensible a boy to refuse to profit by the opportunity.

When the girl bent down beside the prisoner Dolph gave vent to a sigh of genuine relief; for he had watched her slow and laborious progress over the intervening ground with his heart almost in his throat, as they say, with suspense.

She now seemed to be sleeping alongside Amos, but Dolph knew full well that her knife must be diligently at work, sawing at the boy's cruel bonds.

Two, three minutes passed, and Dolph was beginning to grow impatient for a movement to be made, when he saw Amos raise his head again, as if for an observation.

This probably meant that he was free, so far as bonds went.

Would he hasten to slip quietly out of camp and leave the two rascals in possession of the coveted Marlin repeater.

Dolph thought not.

He knew something of the stubborn disposition of his camp mate, and would have been willing to risk considerable on his ability to guess the next move of Amos.

As soon as the woods boy rolled gently over, it could be seen that he was moving toward Big Gabe and not in the direction where freedom lay.

A couple of turns proved quite enough to carry Amos close up to where the husky timber cruiser lay.

Big Gabe had an abiding faith in his ability to awaken should anything amiss come about in camp. At the same time he possessed a still greater confidence in the value of the up-to-date repeating gun that had so fortunately fallen into his possession just when he wanted such a weapon very much.

When he lay down to sleep, therefore, he

had clutched the precious Marlin as though he meant to make it his bed fellow.

While he slept, however, in tossing about uneasily, as men are apt to do when suffering from a wound, for Big Gabe's conscience never troubled him the least bit, he had lost something of his grip on the gun. It was now lying close to his person, but was not in his grasp.

It was possible a by a deft movement, to lift the weapon without disturbing the sleeper; and this was just what Amos meant to do.

When Dolph saw Amos thrust out an eager hand toward the gun, he though he should almost smother, and there was a ringing in his ears, as though all the blood in his body rushed to his head.

And when the weapon was actually lifted, and clutched in the hands of the backwoods boy, Dolph felt ready to almost swing his hat and shout for joy.

Now things were beginning to look somewhat more rosy.

Big Gabe was shorn of his power; for even should he awaken at this juncture, it would be to hear a steady voice demand that he hold his hands up, and find himself staring into the black and threatening tube of that

reliable repeater, with the determined face of Amos pressed against the stock.

Where would his forlorn old-fashioned Winchester be then, with a relay of six shells to back the boy in his demand?

In that moment Dolph felt that the game was as good as won.

They might still have few minor difficulties to overcome, especially if the two men happened to awaken before Amos quitted the camp. But on the whole it looked as though a positive end had been put to Big Gabe's wonderful scheme to capture the millionaire's son, and hold him for ransom.

Amos was again rolling over, only this this time he went in the opposite direction, and away from the sleeping men. Having secured the coveted gun, it seemed that Amos felt no further desire to seek the society of the fellow who had held possession of it.

When he reached the spot where the girl crouched, Amos paused. She had watched his every move with deepest satisfaction, to judge from her attitude as she knelt there.

Amos when he halted, seemed to be saying something to Sallie.

It was easy enough for Dolph to guess the nature of this whispered communication, for the same idea had been in the mind of the watcher.

He was again endeavoring to influence the child to desert her evil father, and go with himself and chums. No doubt Amos had talked it all over with Sallie before, and she knew full well that these kind-hearted boys would see that she arrived safely at her maternal grandmother's home in the Soo, if she but consented.

But from the emphatic way in which she shook her head it was evident that Sallie had not changed her mind a particle, and could not be convinced that her reprobate old "dad" was utterly beyond hope of being reclaimed.

Dolph felt his spirits fall, for somehow he had cherished a hope that the child might give way to the pleading of Amos, for whom she seemed to have taken such a fancy, and allow them to better her condition.

It was hard indeed to leave her there in the midst of such discomfort, and with only those two rough men for company, when if she but changed her stubborn little mind she might live in a pleasant home.

But she continued to refuse to go, and of course they could not think of trying to carry her off against her will.

All the while she was pushing Amos from her, and pointing toward the gully through

which the creek ran, as offering the best means of leaving the camp without being observed; which showed that even this child of Nature had in her short life picked up considerable knowledge of woodcraft from association with her father, who at times was still engaged in trapping fur-bearing animals.

Teddy thought it just as well to rise up on his knees, so as to let the girl know Amos had friends near by, who would see him through.

She did immediatey catch sight of him, and from her gestures it was evident that she was calling the attention of the woods-boy to the fact, for Amos suddenly turned his head, and waved his hand toward them.

Both Teddy and Dolph thereupon beckoned wildly to him to make haste because it seemed the height of foolishness for Amos to delay any longer.

They saw him bend down and kiss Sallie—kiss her just as reverently as a mother might her child at parting; and the act stamped Amos as a true-hearted fellow. Little though he had seen of Sallie, the poacher's daughter, he had in that short time come to be deeply concerned about her gloomy future, and to care for her just as though she were a little sister whom he should always remember.

CHAPTER XXI

THE UPLIFTED HAND

Amos made the transfer without a hitch. He did not even look back once. It was as though he depended wholly upon his chums to note any danger, and warn him of the same in good time.

Another thing Amos did, Dolph was quick to notice, and which showed how an observing wide-awake boy may pay attention to small things.

In making his advance toward the creek, Amos instead of pushing on in a stright course seemed to choose a more roundabout one. Dolph was at first a little puzzled to know why he did this when he might have spared himself some extra labor.

It dawned suddenly upon him that the backwoods boy knew what he was about for by circling in this way he was really keeping himself out of range so that if it became necessary for Dolph to fire he might not stop a portion of the bird shot.

Amos was nothing if not thoughtful, and

while he may have been ready to sacrifice much upon the altar of friendship, that did not necessitate his accommodating Big Gabe and Crawley by sharing their burdens.

Sallie remained on her knees, with her hands clasped in front of her child-fashion, watching the progress of the boy toward the point where in her mind his safety seemed assured, for were not his companions waiting to receive him?

A very pitiful object the little girl looked just then, Dolph was thinking. And then he felt his hand clutched by Amos, who had arrived in company of Teddy.

After all their adventures, the right thing had come about at last; and there did not seem to be any reason why they should not strike out at once for the camp on the shore of the lake, where their tents and canoes awaited them.

Undoubtedly, after the two ruffians awoke, and realized that their prisoner had not only escaped, but carried off the precious Marlin gun with him they would consider it too risky to remain in the neighborhood of those whom they had been plotting against.

And the chances were the boys would have no further trouble with the pair of lawless characters.

One thing alone worried Dolph.

Would little Sallie be suspected of having assisted the woods boy make his escape; and if so, would her brutal father treat her as he was accustomed to serving those bold enough to cross his will?

It was a galling thought, and made the lad grit his teeth because of his utter inability to alter the complexion of things.

So the three boys began to move along the creek bed, intending to leave it at a point further on, and take to the shelter of the woods.

The first thing Teddy did, however, was to exchange guns with Amos; and the very touch of his recovered favorite seemed to send a thrill of pleasure through the whole system of the lumberman's son.

With that gun in his possession Teddy felt doubly armed, and ready to defy the forces of villainy that could be arrayed against him.

They had gone only a short distance, after creeping out of the gully, when a sound came to their ears that caused each of them to stop instantly in his tracks, and listen eagerly.

There could be no mistaking the nature of the eruption, for it was the roaring voice of Big Gabe, calling upon his companions to

get up and see what a trick had been played upon them while they slept.

Immediately the three lads sought places of observation, and the same thought seemed to flash through the mind of each—what was about to happen to Sallie?

As they looked toward the camp they saw that the big timber cruiser had tossed an armful of light wood upon the red embers of the fire, for already a flame had commenced to shoot up, and the immediate vicinity was illuminated.

Crawley was on his feet also, prancing around, and evidently more or less enraged because he could see nothing of the prisoner, who had been there, safely tied hand and foot, when they lay down to sleep.

Big Gabe was pointing toward the girl, and his act was full of significance, for Sallie had not moved from her position, and she was exactly in the spot where Amos had last been seen.

Even duller-witted men than these must have been able to put two and two together, when the conditions were so plain. Crawley of course could easily guess where Amos had received his assistance, even before he strode over, and clutched the child by the arm, savagely dragging her to her feet.

Dolph unconsciously leveled his gun at the man though of course he would not have dared fired at that distance lest Sallie be injured, as well.

But the whole three boys were ready to spring to their feet and dash forward, if it came to the worst.

As Crawley thus dragged the girl's arm up in that violent fashion, what she held clutched in her hand was disclosed; this of course, was the very knife, one used in her kitchen work perhaps, with which the bonds of Amos had been cut a few minutes before.

Big Gabe gave utterance to a howl, and immediately threw up his hands, as if by that tragic gesture to intimate that he was ready to drop the game then and there since there seemed to be a traitor in the camp. But he evidently looked to Crawley to fit the punishment to the crime, since it was a family affair.

Crawley at first seemed a little stunned at this positive evidence of Sallie's guilt; but the pent-up evil in his nature broke out in a volley of oaths.

Carried away by the violence of his passion he raised his heavy hand to strike the child down at his feet.

Had he done so, the man would have had

to reckon with three furious lads, for all of them were ready to leap forward and finish him as he deserved by forcing him to run the gauntlet of their shot guns.

The fire leaped up into a fierce blaze at that moment, as if desirous of allowing the angry man to plainly see the white face of his daughter, as she stood there, bravely facing him, with words from her mother about saving him, on her lips, and a look of calm resignation set upon her face.

It was a tableau for about ten seconds, with the brute's hand raised aloft, and the child standing there, looking straight into his eyes.

Crawley simply could not stand it. Perhaps he saw again the look that had been upon her mother's face the last time he had struck her, before she died; a smile that doubtless had haunted the guilty wretch ever since.

Shaking his ugly head, and drawing a long breath, he threw her from him and turning, strode away.

Dolph sighed.

He felt relieved, and yet in a measure disappointed, for just then when his blood was up, it seemed to the boy that the problem of little Sallie's future could best be decided by energetic action on the part of himself and his chums.

But it was not to be.

One last look they cast in the direction of the fire, and then plunged into the depths of the pine woods.

Dolph wondered if fortune would ever throw them in contact with any of these persons again. True, they had not wholly enjoyed their association with the two men, but their thoughts must often go out to the little lass who was struggling with one of the greatest problems that can beset any of her sex, a task foolishly set her by the mother who was gone. And bravely was little Sallie endeavoring to fulfill her trust.

Amos knew just about where they were, and which direction they must head in order to reach the shore of the lake around the spot where they had made in the camp.

The genius of the Michigan backwoods boy for locating places was very marked. And Teddy, who was a little bewildered himself, was glad to be able to fall back on the one who was able to serve as a pilot.

"I notice you saved one thing from the wreck," remarked Teddy, as they walked steadily forward, hoping to reach the camp, even though exhausted, long before the hour of dawn. "I saw you pick it us on your way out."

"Well, yes," chuckled Amos. "It struck me I was entitled to something, to pay up for all the bother they gave me. It is too bad to get away with old Crawley's fiddle just when he's gone and learned how to start on the second part of "The Arkansaw Traveler," after waiting so long. But I was just fiddle hungry, boys, and I felt I must have the thing."

"Glad of it," said Teddy.

"That's right," added Dolph, enthusiastically; "we can have music every night now after this, and I give you my word, Amos, every time you play I can just shut my eyes and see that crazy old rascal jumping around, snapping his fingers, whistling and acting like he'd just broke out of a lunatic asylum."

"And I'll always see her a-settin' there on that three-legged stool, holdin' her chin in the hollow of her hand and lookin' at me with them big blue eyes. Poor Sallie; poor little gal. She's got a hard row to hoe, pardners," and Amos sighed heavily.

"There's one thing we must do when we get to the Soo," said Teddy, firmly.

"I know what you're going to say," declared Dolph, "and you can just bank on me backing you up in it, too."

"We'll see Sallie's grandmother and make her understand that when the child comes back to her again to stay a spell, she must never let her go away again. I reckon she don't know what kind of a man Crawley is, because Sallie would never say a word against her father. But this thing has got to stop."

When Teddy spoke in that way, the others just knew he meant it, and the chances were little Sallie would sooner or later find that she would not be allowed to make the sacrifice of her health and happiness, in the useless expectation that by so doing she might possibly reform that hopeless, drunken rascal she called father.

So the boys pushed on in a direct line. Tired as they were, they would not let anything keep them from carrying out their plans.

About two hours after midnight they came upon the shore of the lake, with the battered old moon showing them the beloved khaki-colored tent, just as they had left it.

CHAPTER XXII

FLY FISHING FOR BASS

They were certainly a tired lot, all right. For once, at least, the rising sun caught the three boys fast asleep. Indeed, it was fully two hours afterward before any one came creeping out of the tent. Then it turned out to be Amos, wishing to build a fire so they could get a pot of coffee and some bacon ready for breakfast.

No one seemed anxious to stir far that morning.

"And it isn't that we need fear meeting up with those two hard cases, either," said Teddy, when the subject was laughingly referred to by Dolph. "Fact is, we all of us feel pretty well done up, and satisfied to just lie around and rest."

"One thing," remarked Dolph, "I mean to do if I feel a little more chipper this afternoon."

"I can guess it," laughed Teddy, jerking his thumb toward the near-by lake, "why they've been breaking water all morning, just jumping out to see what ails the crowd.

To think of the outfit for bass fishing you've got along with you lying idle, when here they are at your tent door, crazy to grab your flies."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Dolph, "that settles it. I thought I might make a try, but now I know it."

And ten minutes later Teddy chuckled to see him jointing his rod, and arranging what he believed might be an all-round taking cast of bass flies, consisting of a Parmachene Belle, a Montreal and a Red Ibis.

Teddy smacked his lips and as Amos looked up he remarked

"It worked all right. Knew he just could not stand it. Fresh fish for supper, Amos."

But the day was warm, and Dolph knew the folly of going out to cast his flies while the sun was high and the sky clear.

Along about four in the afternoon the conditions changed, just as he had expected would be the case, judging from his observation of the weather.

Some clouds came up and obscured the sun. A gentle breeze, and from the right quarter, too, created a ripple on the surface of the erstwhile smooth lake.

So Dolph jumped into one of the canoes and set out. He dearly loved to feel the thrill

that came when he felt a sturdy bronze-backed finny warrior tugging at the end of his line, now leaping wildly out of the water, and then trying to find some sharp-pointed rock on the bottom of the lake against which to drag the delicate leader, so as to weaken it, and give him a chance to break away.

There was no end of sport.

Everything seemed favorable, and for some time Dolph had the time of his life tempting the eager fish, playing them, sometimes two at once, and capturing three times as many as the camp could use.

But, like the true sportsman that he was, Dolph returned all his catch to the water after the limit he set had been reached.

Tiring finally of the fun, and Amos looking as though anxious to get hold of the catch in order to prepare the fish for supper, Dolph came in.

"Give 'em a try, Teddy, just to see what fighters they have up here in this cool water," he remarked, as his chum came down to admire the catch.

"Guess I will," returned the other. "I may not be as crazy over fishing as you are, Dolph, but I always enjoy the feel of a two-pound fighter like that one you got. Didn't

he keep you hustling, though? I thought you were going to lose the sly dodger when he ran under the boat. But you didn't. You were on to all his tricks, old fellow."

So Teddy went out and had all the sport he wanted, up to the time the shades of evening began to gather, and Amos, beating a big spoon on a frying pan announced that supper was ready.

But Teddy brought in only one fish, which he had accidentally hooked so seriously that he thought best to knock it on the head, rather than return it to the water.

"Enough for breakfast, with that fine fellow," Amos remarked, for he had not cooked all of Dolph's catch.

They all united in declaring the fish gilt-edged. And it was decided while eating supper, to put in just one more day in this lake camp.

Then they would try and find the man who had the horse and wagon, and with whose assistance they hoped to make the long portage over to the railroad, and launch the canoes in the waters of the little Tahquamanon River shortly beyond.

Here at a place named McMillan, they expected to replenish their now diminished

stores, so as to be ready for the long dash down to White Fish Bay, and then skirting the south shore of Lake Superior, bringing up finally at Sault Ste. Marie, where the Government owns the great canal and locks, through which much greater tonnage passes in a summer season than goes through the famous Suez Canal in a whole year.

That night the boys thought it best to keep watch.

They really did not anticipate any trouble in connection with Crawley and Big Gabe; but knowing the character of the two men they felt that it would not be advisable to take any chances.

Besides, Teddy was more than half inclined to suspect that the lumber combine to which his father's company was so bitterly opposed, was partly responsible for the presence of the big and unscrupulous timber cruiser being in the vicinity.

They may have gotten wind of the expedition planned by the three boys; and suspicious lest it might be only a cloak to hide some clever deal of the wealthy lumberman, just because his son was in the party, Gabe may have been hired to keep an eye on their movements.

However this might be, there was no sign of any intruder in the camp, and the night passed without an alarm.

On the following morning Teddy paddled off all alone, his mission being to find the settler living near the north-eastern point of the lake, and making some arrangement with him, looking to the packing of their canoes across country.

It was going to be an all-day job, they figured; indeed they would consider themselves fortunate indeed if night-fall found them fully launched upon the stream that after numerous windings emptied into the great White Fish Bay.

The others amused themselves in various ways, Dolph having to strike off some snapshots of the lake camp. How bitterly he regretted that they would have nothing to remind them of all the strange things happening in connection with the two poachers and little Sallie—only the memory of it all, and a wretched fiddle, which Amos was tinkering with every little while, trying to get it in better shape.

When Teddy came back he was evidently in a good humor.

"All fixed, fellows!" he called out, even before landing.

"Then you found our man?" asked Dolph, quite relieved; for he yearned to set eyes on new scenes and had not fancied going back over their course, as must have been the case had a portage been found impossible.

"Sure, we can bring our canoes nearly to his door. He lives up a creek, too, which makes it all the easier. And in the morning bright and early we strike camp here. No sleeping till after the sun's up, hear!" Teddy continued.

"Well I should say not," laughed Dolph. "But get out here, Teddy. I've fixed my kodak so as to work it automatically at a distance. That gives me a chance to get in the picture, you see, and makes it complete."

"Good for you!" declared Teddy. "I've always been sorry for the fellow who carries a kodak along, because he has to make sets of pictures for others, and hardly ever shows up in one himself. Then I want to go out and say good-bye to the bully bass of this old lake. Get ready for another fish supper, Amos."

CHAPTER XXIII

ALONG THE TAHQUAMANON

The boys must have been up before daylight on that next morning. Certain it is that the sun could not have been half an hour high than they stood on the little beach, waved their hats three times as they gave that many vigorous cheers for Paradise Camp, and then entering their loaded canoes, paddled blithely away.

"A bully little camp, that," declared Dolph, as they urged the light boats along with sturdy sweeps of the spruce paddles; "we'll never forget it, or the gamey bass of Manistique Lake."

"Or a lot of other things that came to pass around this same neck of old Michigan," suggested Teddy.

"I guess not," Amos put in, and they knew very well that he was thinking right then of little Sallie, also how she had stood there without flinching, while that half-drunken brute of a father held his fist half raised.

Would any of them forget that picture as

long as they lived—Teddy and Dolph felt sure they never could.

In due time they found where the man lived who was willing, for a cash consideration, and a pretty stiff one, to convey the empty canoes and the packs that would embrace all the duffel across the miles of pine woods, to McMillan.

The boys knew how to pack things to good advantage. The canoes were laid on top of all, and upside down, being secured thus so no accident could befall them.

As the sun was shining brightly, of course Dolph could not rest satisfied until he had snapped off a picture of the queer load those horses were expected to haul across the country following a "tote" road made long since by lumbermen.

Sometimes the boys tiring of sitting, and with a view to relieving the horses in the bargain, would drop off and walk.

Noon came and found them still on the way. But the man was now sure they would reach their destination by four o'clock, and so they concluded to stop for an hour, bait the horses and have some refreshments themselves.

Amos built one of his speedy fires, and had that aluminum coffee pot settled in place in an amazingly short time.

After a good rest, the journey was resumed through the pine woods. And sure enough the driver kept his word for it was not much after half past three when they came in sight of the outskirts of McMillan.

The boys had vowed not to sleep under any but a canvas roof during the entire trip and so it was planned to launch the canoes immediately, stow their goods, and drop down the river half a mile or so, in the hope and expectation of discovering a good spot to put up the tent.

Then, on the following morning they would pack again and go on down to a place named Newberry, the county seat, where there would be larger stores, the driver told them, and a better chance to lay in the kind of provisions they wanted.

There was no hitch in their plans, and they spent a fairly decent night, marred only by the frequent barking of a pack of dogs from town, that seemed to have banded together for a coon hunt, or something along that order.

On the next morning they followed the railroad for some time, passing one or two small places, and waving their hats to the passengers on a train.

Arrived at Newberry they left Amos in

charge of the boats, while Teddy and Dolph sought the post office to mail letters, as well as to pick up anything that may have been sent from the folks, with whom they had left a copy of their plans, marking the time of their expected arrival at such points as Newberry and the Soo.

Afterwards the two boys took the list they had made out, of things they needed, and visiting the best store in the town, purchased an abundant supply.

"Last chance to get anything," warned Dolph, when Teddy asked if there was any other article he could think of, "we pass no more places from here to the bay, where we strike a small place named Emerson," and on the strength of this plea, Dolph took the liberty of adding a few more things to the list.

"Hope the canoes don't sink with all that load," chuckled Teddy, as, having completed their purchases, which were to be delivered in an hour's time they sauntered down in the direction of the river.

"Oh! they'll bear up, all right," declared the other "and besides, remember that a few meals will lighten the cargo considerably."

"I guess you're right," admitted Teddy. "I never saw three fellows with such appetites

in all my life. I'd hate to board this crowd, believe me."

"Well I don't think any landlady would get rich doing it," Dolph remarked, with a good-natured grin.

They left Newberry about two in the afternoon, and started down the river which immediately entered among the pine woods and marshes that make up most of the region for many miles along the south shore of Superior east of the famous Pictured Rocks.

At one time the boys had contemplated taking in that region after reaching White Fish Bay. They concluded, however, that the open lake was too dangerous a cruising ground for such frail mosquito craft. Besides, they desired above all things, to visit the city on the famous Soo Rapids, and enjoy some of the wonderful things to be met with there.

The current of the Tahquamanon proved very acceptable to the boys. After using the paddles in pushing up against the flow of the Manistique, and then navigating the still waters of the larger lake bearing the same name, it was certainly a pleasure to simply guide the canoes, and allow the current to do the rest.

They were in no hurry, and consequently went ashore rather early to make camp, enticed by ideal conditions.

Dolph managed to get a snapshot of a deer while here. The animal must have been aware of the law's protection for it stood knee-deep in the water browsing upon some sort of of grass or lily pads while the official photographer took several views, finally walking up closer in order to make the animal leap, so that he might secure that variety of picture for the collection.

Dolph also found that there were trout in the stream, quite good-sized fellows too, of the speckled variety that can be caught in Superior, and at the mouth of the rivers along the north shore, as high as eight pounds in weight.

He started in to gather a mess for supper, and declared that he could have taken enough to feed a whole troop of Boy Scouts, had he cared to keep them.

"Never saw fish so crazy to jump into a frying pan," he remarked, afterwards when, the trout having been cleaned, they were rolled in cracker crumbs, and dropped in the hot compound secured by "trying out" slices of fat salt pork.

And when the beautifully browned fish were eaten, the pink meat looking so dainty, every one declared that when it came to sweetness, the trout raised in the clear cold waters of Lake Superior had no rival.

But then that is what hungry campers are saying up in Maine, in the Adirondacks, and in various other places where trout abound —they are always the finest in the whole world, when you have your appetite along with you and the odor of supper is wafted to you on the wind that shakes the foliage of the pine and hemlock.

Another day the boys dropped still lower down the Tahquamanon and in doing so drew nearer the place where they would finally launch upon the bosom of the largest body of fresh water in all America, the mighty Superior, well named by the early explorers.

Of course, there were occasionally things that served to break the monotony of the voyage, Teddy and Dolph for instance, managed to bring up on a partly submerged rock at a place where the current was pretty bracing. They came very near having a spill too, that might have been disastrous in so far as losing things was concerned, though they hardly felt as though their lives had been in

danger because both boys chanced to be good swimmers, and would have clung to the canoe, which had air compartments fore and aft, and was believed to be unsinkable.

But by dint of some clever work the boys managed to save themselves from this dire disaster, though both called it a narrow escape.

"And after this," declared Teddy, "me to tie my Marlin to the ribs of the boat with this piece of strong cord. Then if we do go over I won't have to lose the gun I thing so much of. After snatching it out of Big Gabe's hands, I'd call it a shame now if it went to the bottom of the Tahquamanon River."

"Huh!" added Dolph, "honest now, I don't believe I'll go to all that trouble about my repeater. To tell the truth, I'm not so much stuck on that fine foreign-made gun as I was when my dad made me a present of it. Paid a hundred dollars or so for the thing over in Germany, too. But I've sort of lost faith in the thing. Perhaps it was my fault the mechanism didn't work well; but when a fellow begins to look on his gun with suspicion, he never can enjoy it again. He'll always be afraid something is going to go wrong."

"Better keep it until the end of this trip, anyhow," advised Teddy.

"Guess I ought to, seeing it was a present anyhow but another time you'll find me on deck with a different make of gun," Dolph declared; and his chum only smiled.

Another time the camp was invaded by a wandering hog with a whole troop of partly grown pigs; and they had no peace during the balance of their stay there. Whether the porkers scented food, or "just wanted to be friendly" as Teddy put it, they were hardly driven away in one quarter than another detachment turned up in another place.

Dolph was full of dark threats as to what he would do pretty soon, if the invasion did not let up. He even handled his gun in a ferocious manner, and asked all kinds of questions of Amos as to how best they could roast a small pig in an earthern oven, made after the manner of the old hunters.

But this must all have been said just in the hope of the old sow scenting danger to her brood when she whiffed the odor of burnt powder, might call the invading army off. Certain it was that Dolph was not called upon to fire his gun; and they positively did not

have roast pig for supper, or breakfast, or any other meal, for that matter. And at nightfall their troublesome visitor, grunting their disgust, departed.

And so it came that about three in the afternoon of their last day on the Tahquamanon, while they were all plying their paddles briskly, Teddy gave vent to a loud shout and pointed ahead:

"Look! yonder lies Lake Superior. Tonight we camp on the shore of the Big Water!"

CHAPTER XXIV

DOWN THE SOO RAPIDS—CONCLUSION

Teddy's prohpecy came true.

They did camp that night on the shore of White Fish Bay. A suitable place was found where above a sandy beach a high bank offered good inducements.

But the boys were not taking chances. While the sun went down in a golden and rosy mass of color, who could say that they might not be visited by one of those sudden electrical storm which during the summer sweep over the great lake, making it dangerous for any small boat to be out.

So the boys not only took extra precautions to fasten their tent down securely; but with considerable trouble they even brought both canoes up the high bank and fastened them, bottoms up, with ropes.

Never did they feel better repaid for their labor.

About half way between midnight and dawn a crash of thunder aroused them. Hurrying out, after dressing they found black

clouds sweeping down from the northwest. Already the little waves were breaking on the beach below. Had they simply drawn the canoes out of the water and left them there, doubtless this would have been a period of more of less anxiety concerning the welfare of the small craft.

As it was, all they had to do now was to rope down the canvas a little more securely, and then await the coming of the squall.

It was what Dolph called a "screamer."

The rain was carried on a howling wind that must have come across that big body of water from the Canada side at the rate of fifty miles an hour.

Fortunately the tent had some protection from this fierce wind, since they had erected it just back of a large granite rock. And while the rain beat down in a flood not to speak of the spray that dashed twenty feet in the air, as the great waves slapped up against the rocks back of the now covered beach—in spite of all this the Khaki colored tent did not leak a single drop.

Whoever was responsible for the water-proofing, must have done a fine job; for if ever canvas was put to a severe test, that tent was.

The thunder roared, the lightning flashed, and the wind and waves howled; but while the three canoe boys made no attempt to capture any sleep while the summer storm was at its height, they felt no uneasiness. With those firm rocks underneath, the billows of the biggest of all lakes could do them no damage.

They supposed they might be marooned there for twenty-four hours because the lake would be too rough for their small craft.

In this, however, they were pleasantly disappointed, when the storm went off muttering and growling toward the south, and the boys thought to try and get some sleep, the giant waves were still battering away at their old enemies the rocks, and sheets of spray fell upon the tent from time to time.

When Teddy awoke he missed all this row; and making his way outside, for it was morning, with the sun shining brightly, he was surprised and gratified to discover that the sea had gone down as if by magic, owing to a change of wind.

"That looks as if we might get away this morning," remarked Dolph, joining him.

"It certain does. But where is Amos?" demanded Teddy.

"Listen!"

The sound of chopping came from a point near by.

"Why, of course it wouldn't be Amos if he didn't think of a fire the first thing," declared Teddy.

"And it won't feel at all bad this A. M.," said Dolph. "That storm sure did purify the air and sent the mercury tumbling down the tube. Whew! my fingers are actually *cold*, and this a summer day, too."

That day they paddled a good many miles along the shore. The wind being now in the south, favored them, for as a rule the water was very calm. It warmed up at noon, so that they were glad to strip down to a sleeveless jersey.

And when it was finally decided to camp again for the night they had made such good progress that Teddy, after consulting his chart, declared another such day ought to land them at the Soo where they expected to spend several days ere going down the St. Mary's river to the head of Lake Huron, where they would put their boats on the steamer bound for Mackinac Island.

The first part of the program was carried out on the following day, thanks to the favorable weather, which kept the waves from heading in on the southern shore.

Late that afternoon they sighted the electrical building and tower that marks the wonderful locks of the great Soo Canal. Here they found a congestion of whaleback steamers and barges bound east with ore and grain, while others were going the other way laden with coal and other things needed around Duluth and the vast grain region beyond Superior's farther boundary.

There was almost constant whistling day and night.

Making camp outside of town, the boys spent their first night at the Soo in their own reliable tent.

On the following morning they hired a man to look after things, and started out to see the sights of the place.

Of course, they spent most of their time for two days at the great lock, watching the vessels come and go. The grand rapids also fascinated them. And there was the government fish hatchery on a little island between the canal and the river, where the boys were interested in many things connected with the artificial raising of fish.

In the pools belonging to the hatchery they saw scores of monster speckled trout of a size to make Dolph's mouth water—fully eight

pounds. They would even rush at and seize upon a blade of grass when he tapped the water with it, as an insect might do.

Of course, these fish were kept in order that eggs might be secured by millions, and placed in the jars to hatch out.

The boys early made the acquaintance of some stalwart, dark-featured fellows who had long canoes over twenty feet in length in which for half a dollar each, two of them would take a party of four or six down the whirling rapids.

And of course the boys quickly took that trip. The guides who piloted them claimed to be the grandsons of old John Boucher the Indian whom tens of thousands of tourists knew as the most daring and skilful guide of all the canoe men at the Soo. Old John some years ago took another pilot aboard, and started on the longest voyage he ever undertook. But from what he told the writer, just two years before he lay down in his last sleep, with the familiar roar of the Soo Rapids sounding in his ears, the way was fully charted and buoyed to him, and he had the utmost confidence in his pilot.

In sweeping down the rapids where the outlet of Lake Superior drops nineteen feet

in the mile, the boys noticed the terrible gaping whirlpool over to the left. They saw their guides avoided it sharply, and upon questioning later as to why this was done learned that only one man had dared to always pilot his canoe close to the edge of that seething vortex, to be sucked into which meant death.

"Since Old John is gone, no guide cares to take chances," was the reply.

Of course, the boys also hunted up the grandmother of little Sallie. They found her living in comfort, with a son who had some office connected with the electrical department of the great locks.

The old lady was shocked when she learned what kind of a man Crawley really was. She declared that if the girl came back again as usual after a summer with her father she should never go out into the pine woods again.

And she never did.

Some months later Teddy, who had left his address with the old lady, received a letter from her that really eased his mind greatly, as it did also those of Dolph and Amos, when they came to hear about it.

Sallie was home again, sad, but fully satisfied that she had carried out the last injunction

of her mother to stick to her father to the end.

Crawley was no more. He had been killed by a stroke of lightning, and the girl rendered unconscious at the same time. Recovering, little Sallie had made her way to the camp of a party of Chicago people, whom she knew were on the other side of the small lake.

These people had buried Crawley, and seen to it that the wise little girl was put in charge of a conductor on a train who would deliver her to her folks.

Sallie wanted to be remembered too—as if any of them would ever forget her.

Taking their smaller canoes right into the big ones, the boys again shot the rapids and then leisurely made their way down the St. Mary's River, camping several times and taking their toll of the fierce bass for which certain stretches of this river are noted.

At the mouth of the river they waited for the daily steamboat from the Soo, which took boys and canoes aboard, landing them at Mackinac Island. After a day at this loveliest of all islands, having a week more on their hands, the boys boarded the steamer Islander, which carried them, also their canoes in among the Snow Islands.

Here they passed the balance of their vacation, devoting some time to fishing, more to taking snap shots, and most of all to satisfying the clamorous demands of their healthy young appetites.

Finally they got in touch with civilization, had their boats shipped out, and in the end landed at Teddy's home in Grand Rapids.

Dolph declares that another summer will find him up in Michigan again, with his two staunch and true camp mates. And in return, by letter, Teddy has confided his belief that Amos, who is attending school with the prospect of studying medicine when he graduates, only hopes to go along with them so that he may run over to the Soo and pay his promised visit at the home of the old lady who is the grandmother of Sallie.

THE END